This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07482884 3

NBO
Bates

THE GABLED HOUSE.

THE

GABLED HOUSE;

OR,

THE PROPERTY OF THE NEW-YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

SELF-SACRIFICE.

Lizzie Bates.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CLIMBERS," "PAUL VENNER," "PURPOSE," &c.

PHILADELPHIA:
CLAXTON, REMSEN & HAFFELFINGER,
819 AND 821 MARKET STREET.
1869.

P

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
73373B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1940 L

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1869, by

CLAXTON, REMSEN & HAFFELFINGER,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

STEREOTYPED BY J. FAGAN & SON. PRINTED BY MOORE BROS.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PARTING 11

CHAPTER II.

AUTUMN DAYS 19

CHAPTER III.

THE DAY OF THE PICNIC 29

CHAPTER IV.

NEW FRIENDS 38

CHAPTER V.

THE SEWING CIRCLE 47

CHAPTER VI.

HOME-LIFE 58

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRIENDS 65

CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMER REST 74

CHAPTER IX.

SUMMER REST CONTINUED 80

CHAPTER X.

INDIAN-SUMMER DAYS 86

CHAPTER XI.
WAY-MARKS 95

CHAPTER XII.
HOME-LIFE — THE RIDE TO HOLDEN 103

CHAPTER XIII.
DARK DAYS 110

CHAPTER XIV.
A NEW FAMILY 117

CHAPTER XV.
GOING FROM HOME 123

CHAPTER XVI.
THE LITTLE MUSICIAN 130

CHAPTER XVII.
WAITING AND WORKING 138

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE CLOUD WITH A SILVER LINING 144

CHAPTER XIX.
PHILOSOPHY VERSUS FAITH 154

CHAPTER XX.
LOSS AND GAIN 159

CHAPTER XXI.
NEARING THE ZENITH 169

CHAPTER XXII.
THE CLOUD AT NOONDAY 176

CHAPTER XXIII.
OLD FACES AND OLD FRIENDS 182

CHAPTER XXIV.
HOME AGAIN 186

CHAPTER XXV.

HOPE DEFERRED 191

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOING HOME 195

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOME PICTURES 198

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LEAVE-TAKING 203

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DESERTED HOME 207

CHAPTER XXX.

THE UNLOOKED-FOR GUEST 211

THE OF THE NEW-YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

THE GABLED HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PARTING.

THE day had been calm and still; one of those June days when the world exults in gladness—when human souls pause, and, bending low with the blue above them, bless God silently; the birds in the old elms were still, the bee hummed drowsily, and the butterfly with wings of black and gold hung on the tendrils of the clinging vine. The far-off fields had a dreamy look—the patient herd chewing the cud beneath the sheltering trees; and the plough stood still between the furrows of the springing corn.

Back from the dusty road stood a gabled dwelling, built in the olden time, with wings, and low, deep windows, the sides draped heavily with ivy, and the massive porch curtained with woodbine and the coral honeysuckle. Inside, the walls wore the same ancient look, the rooms large and airy, with furniture of solid oak, quaintly carved and cushioned. The staircase, having its base in the great central hall, was a prominent feature, the steps low and deep, and built of solid oak, leading up to rooms that took their names from the color of the walls.

A strange silence rested on the outer world — the stillness of death was in the house.

Pillowed in her chair, a mother sat with eyes half closed,

and spirit fluttering, anxious to go, and still held by ties of human love. Great beads of perspiration stood on her brow, and the red seal of death on the pallid cheeks.

"Mother, dear mother!" and little children pulling at her gown call back the fleeting spirit.

Hushing a sob, the father lifts the babe of a month old up for a parting kiss. Once more the head falls back, and the white lids open.

"May, kneel down beside me, lay your cheek to mine, and promise me, my child, to take my place. Comfort your father, and be a mother to these little ones."

"I promise, mother!" and laying her round cheek close to the face of the dying, a shower of kisses fell on the trembling lips.

"See that your little brothers make men. And Philip—"

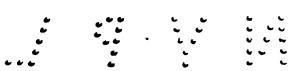
"Mother, I am here."

"It's dark. Let me feel your hand. Kiss me once more—in trust—" There was an effort to say more. "Father."

Quickly the children stepped aside, and, blind with tears, the father kneeled, and clasped the hand on which the signet of his love was placed long years before. A smooth path opened to their feet, starred with meek-hued blossoms. One long June day, and now the sun has set, the twilight of his soul looking away beyond the eastern bounds for a bright dawn. There was a mingled murmuring of wings, and a voice said, "Come."

Lower they bowed their heads; while the babe nestled its small mouth close to the pulseless bosom, and a feeble wail struck to the father's heart, like the sharp keen thrust of a sword-blade.

"Give him to me, father!" and, crowned with new glory, her girlhood veiled with a mother's benison, May



clasped the little one in her slender arms, pressed her full lips to the small face, and thus the seal of motherhood was set. Death is at all times stern; but never does he seem so unrelenting as when he tears a mother from the children of her love.

It was still in June; the oaks were just as green, the rose-trees full of bloom; the robins left their nests in the elms, and perched on the gables noiselessly.

In the same blue room a group of friends, silent, save when a black fold rustled against the coffin-lid, or stifled sob told that a mourner was taking the last look of the peaceful dead.

The prayer was said, and the glad hymn seemed a triumphant song—the spirit ransomed, freed. Down the broad staircase came a lonely man, trembling beneath the pressure of his grief. In his bosom nestled the babe—a rose-leaf torn from the parent stem. Resting his elbow on the coffin-lid, great sighs escaped him, and, bending his noble head, he touched the lips that for the first time gave no answering pressure to his own.

Was it the wind ruffling the soft brown hair? One long, lingering look, and he turned away, the feeble wail of infancy bringing him back to consciousness.

With gentle care a neighboring woman took the babe, and over the marble threshold they bore the mother's coffin. Drawing his hat over his swollen eyes, his arm in that of the pastor, the stricken man followed as one who saw not, with Philip and May arm in arm, and Robert and Ethel, their small faces hushed into new seriousness.

It was a long train. Mrs. Shippen had been known and loved. Skirting the town, they passed the humble dwellings of the poor, the doorways filled with aged women and little children, to whom the dead had shown kindness in her life.

"There 's not many like her; more 's the pity to see her go!" said Mrs. White, leaning on her staff. "Many 's the time I 've turned out of my way to pass her door, and never without a word, or if 't was warm, a glass of home-brewed beer, a bunch of roses, or a sprig of balm. She had a good, kind heart. God bless her children! It seems strange he 'd take her at such a time."

"There 's many of us could be spared that hain't babies, as Mrs. Shippen had!" echoed Mrs. Sellers, resting her hands upon her hips, and straining her eyes in the direction of the funeral train.

"They say she made May promise to be a mother to them children, and she 's but a chit of a girl herself."

"May will be wanting a home of her own; they say that Rufus Holt is set that way."

"Rufus Holt! Well, all I can say is, whoever Rufus Holt wants he 'll be sure to get; folks that have money, as his mother has, can do about anything they want to."

"We shall see."

The sun was sinking to a bank of crimson cloud as the funeral train wound through the gate of the old churchyard. It was not the first time Mark Shippen had been there: three lovely children were sleeping side by side — a quiet resting-place, with trees of tender green, and perfumed vines to cling about the glittering marble that told the name and age; with roses blooming just as sweetly there as in some gay parterre: birds twittered in the spreading boughs, and squirrels looked from out their cushioned homes.

Slant sunbeams bridged the yawning grave. Resting the coffin on the flowery turf, the pastor stood with head uncovered as he read and prayed; while the small group that pressed around the coffin knew not whether here or there, benumbed and almost senseless with their woe.

Purple shadows clustered 'round the graves as back they wound to the old home, silent and still, as though conscious a soul had passed — never to return.

With a sharp cry, May slid from the pressure of Philip's arm, up the broad stairs to her room, bolting the door, and walking to and fro, deadening, if thus she might, the bitter, stinging pain. Twilight deepened; she knew that they would miss her, and tottering to the window, she kneeled and rested her head on the casement. Words came not, but she felt a sense of rest; her temples throbbed not so wildly; the unvoiced cry had been heard; before she called, He had answered her; she felt the pressure of an unseen hand — the Divine presence comforted her. A peaceful look was on her face as she went down — a look of rest: the father saw it, and his heart was lightened; while the boy Philip thrilled with high resolve.

"You need to eat," said Mrs. James, as she placed the chairs. "And there 's the baby. Mrs. Henderson was in a bit ago; she says she 'll take it for a week, and Mrs. Stiles, and Mrs. Staples too; or if you think it best to put it out: the weather is getting warm, and you 'll have to be mighty careful if it lives." And Mrs. James fluttered in and out of the kitchen, very much to the disgust of Bridget, who sat moodily by the fire-place, at one moment threatening to pack up, and the next wondering who was to be mistress; for her part, she would not stay "if everybody was free to give the order."

"I told Jane to bring over the milk as soon as it was strained," resumed Mrs. James; "it won't do to go from one cow to another, and there 's the little white gives good, rich milk."

"Thank you, Mrs. James. We have milk."

"But you don't mean to tend the child yourself?"

"Why not?"

"A young girl like you!"

"I am not too young to try."

"I don't 'spose you ever dressed a baby in your life."

"I can learn."

"It requires a mighty lot of patience, I can tell you; and when he 's sick, and has the colic, as babies mostly do — it would not do at all;" and seating herself beside the anguished man, the busy woman opened the wounds afresh, suggesting plans, and nurses not a few, with prudent women to keep his house, and show a tender, loving care to the little ones.

"I don't know, Mrs. James; it must be as May says. Sure, she is young; but her mother taught her as a mother should, and for the present I think she had best try. We shall all be happier."

"I declare it does seem strange; but a man never knows his own mind. Let May try! Why, she 'll smother the baby the first night. However, it 's no business of mine, my skirts are clean. I 've told them what I think, and I ought to know, me that 's had nine, and brought them all up, not losing one;" and good, indignant Mrs. James fairly ran down the steps.

It was new work for Philip, as he tried in boyish fashion to tend the dainty child wrapped in soft flannel, the pink blossom of a face distorted with a little wailing cry. "Poor little thing!" and he kissed the tiny lips, blushing deeply as he did so.

"Hear me say my prayer, sister," and Robert kneeled, with one arm closely pressed around Ethel's waist, lifting his eyes reverently:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep:
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take;
And this I ask for Jesus' sake."

"Me, too, Jesus," said Ethel, reverently.

A tear fell on the counterpane as May kissed the red lips.

"What makes you cry, sister? You afraid Jesus won't do it. Mother said he would."

"I didn't like to have him carry mother away. Maybe he wanted her up there." And Ethel held up her dimpled mouth.

"Kiss me too: you are our little mother."

"Little mother!" How it thrilled her! Could she do it? she would try.

"Let me take him," as she found the baby writhing in Philip's arms, with Bridget standing over him, her eyes wide open, but knowing little how to comfort him.

"Hush, baby, hush!" and soothing as she had seen her mother do, she rocked the babe, sliding from low cooing words into a peaceful song.

"You will let me help you to-night?" said Philip, as he brought the milk and warmed it by a gentle heat.

"No, Philip, I must learn, and to-night: it will be easier than any other time. It will do me good to sit here for a time, and then perhaps he 'll sleep."

Unconscious of the hour, May still sat, the baby on her knee; while through her tangled brain quick thoughts flashed. As Mr. Shippen said, she had been taught with uncommon care—perchance looking forward to the time when, wanting a mother's love, it would be hers to comfort the stricken ones.

In the stillness of that midnight hour it all came back, the days of weakness, when catching glimpses of what there was in store, the mother taught lessons for daily use. Far away the stars twinkled, and the moonbeams wreathed the marble columns in the place of graves. A tear balanced on the long lashes, and fell on the upturned face. With a

sudden impulse May kissed his brow, his hair, his little pink-tipped fingers.

"Father, preserve him, and grant, we pray, that he may make a good and useful man," as she laid him in the crib, once more kissing the pink face: then kneeling at the casement, threw back her hair to the cool fingers of the wind. Through the rift of leaves, her eye caught the gleam of the village steeple. The quick tears started: not the least would she miss her there. Unless from illness her place in church was never vacant; now her voice would be wanting in the song of praise. How could she kneel alone? A wave of silver moonbeams closed over her, and a voice of unutterable sweetness thrilled her heart. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

Insensibly time passed, and the fingering wind seemed but the light touches of the mother's hand. Out of the grief and bitterness strength was born. The cross did not seem heavy — "I will help thee, I will sustain thee," sounding through the stillness.

Calmly, trustingly as a child resting in the care of a parent, May Shippen left the window. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

CHAPTER II.

AUTUMN DAYS.

THE golden grain was garnered. The November days were full of beauty. Sitting at her door weaving in golden threads, May Shippen let her eyes wander to the distant hills; the rich embroidery of tree and shrub softened into new beauty, seen through a veil of delicate blue haze.

Slipping the ruffle through her fingers, she looked and worked — unwinding fairy-tales, and telling Robert of the reindeer and the polar snows, with crystal palaces floored with opal and roofed with diamond, with pillars of porphyry blazing with ruby, topaz, and amethyst; of porches and colonnades arched with incomparable grace and splendor; of laughing girls and black-eyed boys drawn in sledges, or flying over seas of ice on silver skates.

"I'm to have a pair at Christmas, father says."

"You can't go as fast as Hans did: 't would make you dizzy," cried Ethel; and May was called upon for something else — jumping the distance, and picturing countries far remote, with rare tropical fruits and flowers, birds with gay plumage flashing through the trees: "A lavish wealth of beauty everywhere; but lacking knowledge that we prize so much."

"Ain't you glad we don't live there?" exclaimed Ethel, giving her doll a little toss. "I'm just glad that I live here; and I'm to be as good as I can be, to pay God back again."

The sunbeams lay on the garden wall — and the mingled breath of mint and healthful herbs Katy had gathered; their broken stems drying in the November sun. So busy they did not hear the gate open; did not know they had a visitor till she stood before them.

"How is it possible, May Shippen, that you can stay in the house such a day as this?" and Miss Jerusha Hazard dangled her sundown by one string, and stooped to crop an aster on the walk.

"You see I 'm hardly in the house, Miss Hazard," said May, offering her guest a chair. "I like to look at the sunset from this door — the warm rays slanting through the trees, and falling in golden showers on the short, crisp grass."

"You stay in the house too much: it is not healthful for a young girl like you."

"I go out when occasion requires."

"But you don't visit, as you used to."

"I am older than I was."

"Not old enough to be so staid."

"Indeed, I did not imagine that I looked so grave," and a musical laugh set the butterfly wings in motion.

"It 's unnatural, and ought not to be."

"What ought not to be, Miss Hazard?"

"You ought not to take charge of the house, and have the care of these children."

"You set aside Katy."

"Who 's Katy?"

"Katy Brown."

"Oh, she does what you tell her; the responsibility rests with you."

"I do it because I feel that I can make it happier for father and Philip. I try to do as I think mother would have done."

"No doubt but you do well enough. I did n't mean that; but you ought not to do it at all. At your time of life you ought to enjoy more."

"I enjoy this."

"Nonsense! it is dragging the life out of you; everybody sees it, but your father. I wish he did."

A tear gathered up. The baby stirred, and hushing him back to sleep, May was saved the misery of letting her visitor know how much her words had pained her.

"You have a rare faculty; he 's off to sleep again," as May resumed her work, sitting in the open door.

"There is little trouble in learning to do, provided we undertake with a will to succeed."

"I don't know: some folks have a kind of knack with babies; I never had: they are always fussing, and have to be coddled over so much."

"Felix is very good, and father tells me a great many things I never dreamed to learn from him."

"I dare say. Have you seen Belle Staples lately?"

"She was here to-day."

"She told you of the picnic?"

"She said there was to be one."

"You are going, I hope."

"I hardly think I can."

"That 's just what I told mother. I did n't believe you 'd go; and says I, 'Mother, I 'll just put up my work, and run up there for a minute, and I 'll bring the baby and them children here, and let May have a good time like other girls.' "

"You are very kind, and I am much obliged. To-morrow will be Friday, and this dress must be finished. I promised Ethel, would she wear the old one last Sabbath, I would have this in readiness by the next."

"She can wait, I should think."

"Mother always kept her promise, and I would not like to show Ethel that she can break hers."

"If you have so much to do, suppose I come here. I'm sewing now for Mrs. Judge Staples: it won't put her out a bit, if it is n't finished till next week. I know Belle wants you to go."

"I am sure you would find the children troublesome, and father is not strong. It would disturb him to have me gone."

"Your father does look poorly: what does he complain of?"

"He does not complain, and still he is not well."

"Misses your mother. It 's not to be supposed he finds the house the same; pity you ain't a little older, May: it 's kind o' lonely for him. Children must be children. Well, you won't go to the picnic, if I do come up?"

"I could not allow you to take this trouble, Miss Hazard."

"Trouble or no trouble, I 'm willing to do it. Seen Rufus Holt since he came back?"

The rich blood tinted May's cheek, then left it white as alabaster, and the long lashes veiled the violet eyes.

"I see him occasionally."

"He 'll be to the picnic, I reckon."

"I presume so."

Mr. Shippen was at the gate as Miss Jerusha passed.

"Dear me! you do look dreadfully down. Well: it 's no wonder; this has been a dragging summer, and May looks nigh upon worn out. I just think, Mr. Shippen, you ought to get somebody to help that girl; you won't have her long, maybe."

"Did she say she wanted I should?"

"Dear me, no, Mr. Shippen. But it stands to reason, a young girl like her."

"She misses her mother. May is a good girl, Miss Hazard."

Slowly Mr. Shippen walked up the path, hung his farm utensils in their places, and entered the house.

"You are tired, father?"

"A little, daughter."

"Here is cool, fresh water," and May filled a bowl, and laid an exceedingly white towel beside it.

"And, papa, we've had ever so many butterflies to-day; I 'most catched one: it was ever so big, with black wings all powdered with gold: it would n't stay, though; and sister told us how it used to be only a crawling worm. Is n't it strange for it to have such beautiful wings, papa?"

"And we shall have wings, only ours will be white," Ethel chimed in. "Will it be true? are mamma's white and glistening?"

"The Bible leads us to think so."

"Sister promised to tell us more. Miss Hazard came, and she could n't."

"Miss Hazard seldom goes anywhere without some especial reason. What was it to-day, daughter?"

"There 's to be a picnic to-morrow, a kind of nutting party, and Miss Hazard is anxious for me to go."

"Do you desire it, May?"

"No, father."

"If you would enjoy it, child, go by all means. Katy is here, and I have nothing particular to call me away. It is not necessary to trouble Miss Hazard."

"I could not help her offer, father."

"She is not a woman that I greatly admire." And Mr. Shippen turned to the crib.

"It is a pity to call him baby; but Felix is a large name for a little fellow;" at the same time lifting him from where he lay with broad open eyes. "Been troublesome to-day, sister?"

"He is a very good baby, considering the care he gets. I sometimes think he knows—" and May hesitated.

"You do nicely, May. I am surprised to see you get along so well."

Such commendation was dearer to May Shippen than any other could have been: she loved her father, and it nerved her to constant effort. To see him growing white and thin each day had a sting that made her more than willing to stay at home, provided his happiness would be increased, as she knew it would be. Supper was nearly ready, or she could not have refrained from running up to her room just for a little cry — not that she had anything to cry for; but tears would have subdued the pressure, and blunted the pain of Miss Hazard's words.

A step on the back porch, and Philip swung his milk-pail on to the shelf.

"Not as much as usual. What is the reason, Philip?"

"There 'll be enough to answer?" and Philip looked anxiously into May's face.

"We must make it answer."

"You remember Mrs. Aldrich, the lame woman, that thought so much of mother?"

"Yes."

"She 's getting old now; and the daughter she lives with is a widow with small children. Coming by, she hailed me to ask after you; and she looked so poor and uncomfortable — and somehow, before I was aware, I asked her how they lived. Not even milk, only bread: I could n't bear it, and stopping Bess, I milked her there. Was it wrong, May?"

"No, Philip; we shall have enough, and if we don't, I would rather they should have it."

"It is decided Mr. Meade is to come," exclaimed Philip, seating himself at the supper-table.

"To teach the school this winter?"

"Yes; I called at the office coming home. Dr. Prime and Judge Staples were there. They said he was to come; and more than that, Dr. Prime said he was not only a superior scholar, but a most excellent young man."

"I am glad of that; scholarship is needful, and should be sought in a teacher; but affable manners and a firm Christian principle should be the foundation."

"He will commence Monday week," continued Philip.

"I would like you to keep on with your studies. Prince and Jerry can do all there is to be done outside. It will be better for me to be occupied." And Mr. Shippen was careful to help the others, hardly tasting a morsel himself.

In vain May tried to tempt his appetite.

"No, he did not feel hungry. What was you saying about Mrs. Aldrich?" turning to Philip.

"Her daughter has been ill for weeks, and they are poor. It seems there was a mortgage on the place, and debts, more than could be paid with the small property Mr. Belcher left. His widow tried to do; and when they turned her out, with her lame mother, and little, helpless children, she broke down at once."

"I did not think Finley was such a man. A few hundreds more or less would have made small difference with him."

An hour later, May and Philip were making their way through the moonbeams, choosing a by-path that led directly to the widow's cottage. Not far, the glittering spire of the village church, with glimpses of marble columns through the trees; above, the stars burned; and the moon hung, like a silver shield, against the blue background.

"How beautiful He made our world!" and May shook back the curls from her white forehead. "I now begin to understand what mother used to mean by seeing God in

His works, giving each season a peculiar beauty, and rendering it impossible for us to decide which we like best. I used to think 't was spring; the freshness and the beauty held a nameless charm and fascination."

"The cold, glittering aspect of winter had something to do with this — a rigid old king crowned with diamonds: there are few to mourn when he is overthrown."

"It was not the beauty that so greatly pleased mother, as it was to feel that He made it for us, suiting his gifts to our necessities, lifting us up, refining our tastes, strengthening and developing the good within us; and then coming himself. Oh, Philip, I don't believe I could live if it was not for this. When I keep it before me all the time, it makes everything easy."

"I wish I could feel so; but somehow I don't know just where to begin;" and Philip changed his basket from one hand to the other.

"Dr. Prime says we must begin just where we are: that we build up our lives here as a man builds his house, laying a foundation, and then building upon it—with looks, words, and acts."

"There it is; the foundation requires care, and how is this to be given when we are obliged to do so many other things at the same time?"

"It takes time, as well as care: not built in a day. I would n't wonder if foundations are made of the hidden thoughts and purposes of our hearts. Strength and firmness are more to be thought of than beauty. The top stones are all that we can see, and these answer to the little acts we do continually; the motive, like the foundation, is out of sight."

"In that case we ought to be doubly cautious what we do."

"Is n't that just what mother was always telling us?"

"I wonder why it is; but I did n't seem to think half so much of what mother said, when she was with us. You don't know, May, how much it troubles me, when I think of the many times I grieved her. I did n't think half so much about living right as I do now."

"We leaned upon mother."

"We knew she would make it right; she always did."

"That may be the reason why she was taken from us. Jesus wants us to lean upon him. I do try;" and May's voice was strangely low.

"I don't mean to trouble father; I mean to make a good man for mother's sake."

"Not for mother's sake — though I am sure she knows; but for Christ's sake, Philip."

"We are almost there! Did you ever see anything half so lovely?" and Philip raised his cap and stood with uncovered head. "I don't understand how it is that some people think there is no God. Judge Staples does n't think there is; and I've heard father say that he has a good knowledge of astronomy;" and Philip traced out the few constellations that he knew.

"Scientific knowledge does not lead to the understanding of God. True, He reveals himself in his works; but more by His word and by His Spirit. Judge Staples does not look upon the Bible as the revealed will of God: it is to him only a good book, full of rich truths and gems of wisdom — whether Confucius, Plato, or Paul, he does not mind; but written by men, in an age not as wise as ours."

A network of silver veiled tree and shrub, laying on the fence-rails, and burnishing the crisp brown grass.

"I am glad to have seen it to-night; it will be something to remember when I am lonely," said May.

Before the door they found Mrs. Aldrich, the moonbeams whitening her hair, and her withered cheeks softened in the

mellow light. Very cordial was her welcome, holding May by the hand, and letting her trembling fingers rest like a benediction on her head.

"Trying to be like your mother, child. It does me good to hear how you get along. I am glad to see you to-night."

"With your leave, I will empty this basket," and Philip entered the room, lit only by the light of the moon.

"You 've done enough for one day, Philip; poor little things! We had bread, and as soon as they drank the milk, they were off to sleep. It 's the first time they 've had a good meal since their mother was sick."

"How is she to-night?" May asked.

"I left her asleep as you came up."

"We will not disturb her; to-morrow one of us will be in. I am sorry you did not let us know before."

"Rachel was in hopes every day to be better; and then she hated to have people know."

"You must not be afraid to have us know," continued May.

"Bless you for your mother's own child. Many 's the time she 's done me a good turn. God bless her children."

Over the silver pathway to their own home: the whippoorwill was singing a low chant; the katydids in the grass; the mournful coo of the dove.

"I am glad we went, May. I would go farther than that to hear one of mother's friends say, 'God bless you.'"

"It was not much—simply doing what we could."

"They will sleep better for it."

"We shall, Philip."

CHAPTER III.

THE DAY OF THE PICNIC.

THE cool crisp air was full of vigor. Philip went to the farm, and May to her household ways. Mr. Shippen was more cheerful, and Robert and Ethel offered willing hands. Katy finished her duties, and then went to pay a visit to her mother.

Day by day, autumn unfolded new beauties, running up a banner here and there emblazoned with rare heraldry; painting a flower, and touching up the hills with Orient tints. Through the open door the breeze whispered love-messages, causing the heart to thrill, the busy feet to falter, "sending princely tokens, and, best of all, coming himself." And May paused, her eager eyes looking, through the filmy veil, up to the hills rich in cloth of gold. Never before had this child-woman read the lesson of His love so perfectly. The world no longer seemed a huge tread-mill, driving the rounds like dumb, unconscious cattle, anxious only for the stall and the well-stored crib; neither was it a vast lazar-house full of infectious disease, but rather a spacious temple, majestic in proportion, grand in its conception, arched with splendor, surmounted by a royal dome, and hung with pictures lifting the soul up as with wings. Her hands were not less active, neither her lessons to Ethel and Robert less impressively given. Drinking in this glorious beauty made her only the more earnest, lest failure be written over against her work.

A drowsy hum was in the air; the farmer from his field

enjoyed the quiet of his noonday rest; the patient oxen were unloosed and left to feed at will; the little housewife hummed a song to Felix in his crib; and Ethel's soft cheek was pillowed on her hand, the little, active brain tangling itself in dreams.

Up through the stillness came gleeful voices and silvery sound of laughter. Young and light-hearted, May had always mingled in the village sports; and walks and rides had never been complete without her presence. Try as she would, there came a sense of pain, a sharp, quick thrust, like needle-points to unsheathed nerves. Why should it, bringing remembrances of what had been? Bravely she struggled, looking beyond the hills, and seeing jasper walls and crystal battlements, with throngs of white-winged seraphs coming and going, intent on deeds of love. "These are they which came out of great tribulation," sounding through her heart; "no cross, no crown!" and May runs over the lessons taught by that angel mother. Insensibly her head droops. The path is plain, the work definite — the cross not half as heavy as it once was. She cannot deny there was a time when she longed to lay it down, or to change it. It would do no harm, she thought, to drape it with flowers, or perchance to bind it with jewels. Surprised and awed, it grew so heavy she had thrown them all aside: a small, brown cross without ornament, and she had come to like it; it was the cross given her — she did not wish for another.

The sunbeams no longer bar the door. Cheerful and gay as one who trusts can only be, May sits in the shadow of the elms spinning golden thread; with Robert and Ethel weaving garlands of parti-colored flowers. A quick step was on the walk, and the gate swung to with an audible click.

"A picnic by yourself! May I come in?" and Rufus

Holt drops into the vacant seat, and tosses his cap behind him.

"It is a long time since I saw you, May. I did not think to see you on the hill; and still I thought of you."

"'T was very kind. I thank you, Rufus."

"As though there ever was a time when I did not!" was whispered half aloud; and Rufus took Ethel by the hand and led her down the walk.

"You have not told me what you have been doing these summer days while I've been idling," as slowly he returned, with his hands full of buds and blossoms. "Ethel gave me leave to spoil your beds; I'll make amends to-morrow;" and skilfully he twined a wreath to crown the soft brown hair.

"What I have done it would be difficult to put in words: the little, common things of daily life."

"I have heard," continued Rufus, still twining flowers, "that life is a rare mosaic, and the little, common things shine with more beauty than we think, till they are set."

"There 's beauty in the thought; I'll think of it."

"Weaving it in, perhaps;" and Rufus gathered more leaves and buds.

We may as well give an outline of Rufus Holt as he sits in the shadow of the great elm. In stature he was slightly more than average height, with a breadth of shoulder that spoke of physical power; and character of more than ordinary force was written in his face, and in the eye a strange and subtle charm, at one time flashing with wild, daring light, the next shadowed with a great tenderness. There was a spirit in the haughty curve of his upper lip, which would have been disdainful, had not the lower one met it with a round, full curve; the nostril had an impatient dilation of its own; but the square chin and strong lower lines told of sufficient strength to hold in check

whatever evil there might be in him. And over all the wonderful beauty of these changing features, the forehead, calm and impassive. So strongly did it contrast with the tanned tint of the face below, that one could not see the fine texture of the skin, and the whiteness swept by the thick, dark hair, without feeling assured, in some sense, of the owner's truth and nobleness.

Branching off into what he had seen and heard, Rufus Holt told of his summer tour; flashing through the places he had visited, the people he had met, the sights he had seen, with such vividness and abandon, it seemed to May she could see them too, drinking in the salt sea-breeze, with its great human wave ebbing and flowing ceaselessly. Then drawing from his pocket a small book, richly bound in green and gold, he began to read, in a clear, firm voice, the quaint old rhymes, stopping to pin them with a thought bright as the sunshine out of which it was spun.

"I like that weird old poem," said May, while the deep rose-tinge came in soft waves to the rounded cheek. "A strange power takes possession of me, every drop of blood thrills, and my eyes seem gifted with new sight. Like the guest spell-bound, I am constrained to follow to the end."

Thrusting his finger in between the leaves, Rufus continued, seemingly unconscious if his eyes were on his book or somewhere else. At length he paused.

"With your permission, I will leave the book."

A simple "Thank you," and May resumed her work, while Rufus strung his thoughts on shorter threads, stooping to run a race with Ethel on the walk, and teaching Robert how to mount the gate.

A sudden darkness stole across the sky; a cloud loomed up. Before the sombre tints had darkened into gloom, the ravelled edges caught a rosy stain, with golden gashes gleaming through and through.

"I was afraid you would be lonely, child," said Mr. Shippen, tossing a red-cheeked apple into Ethel's hand, and letting Robert search his pockets through, filling his apron with the luscious fruit.

"It has been a charming day. I thought of you. It is wrong perhaps, as Miss Hazard said, to keep you so confined."

"It suits me, father."

"Well, child, we will say no more about it — only this: if you tire at any time, don't fail to tell me. True, it would not seem like home to have a stranger here; but I would not have you feel the burden before your time, May."

"So long as father is satisfied with what I do, I am content;" and flinging her arms about her father's neck, the flushed face was hid.

"You are a good girl, May, and growing like your mother every day."

"What is this, May?" and Philip opened the book so richly bound in green and gold.

"A book Rufus Holt brought in this afternoon," answered May, without raising her eyes.

"How long since he returned?"

"He came a week ago."

"And not to the picnic?"

"He was there awhile."

Philip said no more, turning the leaves, and reading snatches to himself, till supper-time.

"Mrs. Prime will be in to-night;" and Philip rocked the cradle to and fro.

Mrs. Prime was a woman of healthful pulses and a tempered brain. Richly endowed, she knew that in her weakness lay a giant's strength — her quiet, gentle life and homely ways having an influence beyond her husband's

polished speech: a prudent woman, holding her thought in check — shaping little things with a cunning hand, as a great artist throws his light and shade.

"I am glad to find you doing your best," said Mrs. Prime, as May dropped her apron and took a seat beside her guest. "It is not what we do, but the way we do it, that tells upon our strength. A cheerful, happy spirit makes light work: burdens slip from smooth shoulders."

"I begin to see a little what it means, 'I would have you without carefulness.' Mother used to say it was friction that wore machinery, and the pressure of undue care had the same effect."

"A sunny, cheerful spirit we are all privileged to have; and, above all, humility."

"Not ambitious to be above what we are able?"

"Ambitious to do His will, and by our lives to cause His glory to shine forth; but not to raise ourselves by stepping-stones of our own planting. The lily of the valley is content to bloom beneath His eye, the lowliest flower the sun has to shine upon, and the loveliest."

"It seems plainer to me every day — the great life-plan, the nobleness of a soul made in His image: and, still, I am sometimes afraid. There is need of experience, and I know so little."

"With One to ask continually at your side?"

A swift look leaped into May's eyes, a quick indrawn breath. "I do not feel this as mother did."

"You are not as old, my child. The slip just planted is not a tree with bud and blossom to charm the eye with beauty; neither has it strength to defy the storm. Years must pass, and many a struggle it must wage, before even the outline of what it will be is fully seen. We are to work out, step by step; as the embroiderer, sitting at her frame, filling in thread by thread, and hardly conscious, when the

day is done, of what she has achieved. It is only when seen as a whole that the work stands out in beauty. So with us: it is the finished work."

"If I could only feel sure that I am in the right path."

"The blood on the lintel secured Israel's peace. It is most needful to be simple and clear as to what it is which constitutes the groundwork of peace. There is no such thing as being partly saved and partly lost; partly justified and partly guilty; partly born of God and partly not. There are but two states: we must be in either the one or the other. All we have to do is simply to rest upon God's testimony. We must believe that God is true, that He means what He says, and that His promises will all be fulfilled. 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' You remember the occasion. What would you think of the conduct of an Israelite, had he been asked as to his enjoyment of peace, and he had answered, 'I know there is no escape but the blood of the lamb; and I know that that blood has been shed and sprinkled on my door-post; but somehow I do not feel quite comfortable: I am not quite sure if I am safe. I fear that I do not value the blood as I ought: that I do not feel exactly as I ought to feel.' Would it not have been absurd? The Israelite was saved by the blood, and not by his thoughts about it. God did not say, 'When you see the blood,' but, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' What tranquillized the heart of the Israelite was, that God saw. Just so in your case, my child: Christ died as a perfect atonement for sin, and God's testimony assures us that whosoever believes this, that is, believes in the efficacy of the blood of Christ, is safe: the claims of justice have been fully met. Need there be any fear about this?"

"Has my feeling, my experience, nothing to do in this matter?"

"Believe what God says because He says it, not because you feel it. True, the Spirit reveals Christ. He makes us to know and to enjoy Christ. He bears witness to Christ: takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. His operations are essential. Without Him we can neither see, feel, enjoy, nor exhibit Christ. Still, the work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace. He is not our title. He but reveals our title, working in us, in order 'to present every man perfect in Christ.' He is the Author of all good in us, or that emanates from us, His work constantly going on. The work of Christ is a finished work, absolutely and eternally complete. 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.' You believe this, my child?"

"Most assuredly."

"God is well pleased in the finished work of Christ—'well pleased for his righteousness' sake.' That righteousness is not founded upon your feelings, or upon your experience, but upon the shed blood of the Lamb of God, the precious blood of Christ. How sweet it is to feed upon this precious Christ, whose blood has cancelled all our guilt! resting in Him; saved here, saved eternally!"

Through the moonbeams to the brown gate: Dr. Prime was there.

"I am on my way from Mrs. Belcher's," he said to Philip. "I was glad to learn that, burdened with duties as I know you are, you still find time to think of others. Mr. Finley regrets what he has done, and will rectify it as far as money is concerned. A broad benevolence, and love such as God gives to us, should be our aim."

Silently May slipped her hand through Philip's arm, and slowly walked to the house.

"To do our best at all times," remarked Philip.

"And the best is reared on every day's experience; farther to-day than we were yesterday."

"There are grave questions that come up. To each of us certain talents are given, to be returned with usury. What if we make mistakes? — with a strong desire to do, and still not knowing how."

"We are to ask, assured the path will open. The One who gave the talent needful for a certain work, will surely open the way whereby this talent can be used to the limit of its power," answered May.

"A firm assurance of this would do away with a thousand nameless fears."

"We hold His promise, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.'"

"But if we ask amiss?"

"When you ask father for anything, you never hesitate because you fear that you will ask amiss."

"Asking father is a different thing."

"Not so great is his love as that of our dear Heavenly Father. We may approach very near him — we may ask in confidence;" and, sitting on the step, May rested her head on Philip's shoulder, and told him all of Mrs. Prime's words.

"Mother felt so: she never seemed to have trouble about anything," said Philip as she closed.

"Let us try to trust as firmly, Philip." And together they entered the parlor.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW FRIENDS.

DELICATE frost tracery had given place to a thick covering of snow, and the transparencies of tree and shrub were of the same clear white. Mr. Meade was in school, and thither Philip went every morning with his books, and returned at night tired, but the wiser.

To May Shippen the days brought little change, save that Felix was older, a stout, healthy boy that required far more care to keep him from falls and tumbles than in the days of utter helplessness. Mr. Shippen was more at home; and still the effort he made to be cheerful pained more than it rested her. Robert and Ethel commenced school; but the large rooms looked empty without them, and it was decided to let them study and recite at home.

By a careful division of time, May found that she could give certain hours to her book; and the pleasure she realized was more than compensation for the effort it cost her. Try as he would, Philip was seldom up before her in the morning. The red fire-light reflected on her book, bringing out the soft folds of her dress, the tiny white ruffles at the throat and wrists. Very demure were the bright eyes, and the lips close as though there was no such thing as giving words to thought.

Slowly and by degrees the shadows leave the room. Over the white shoulders of the hills a rosy stain rolling off into waves, and all at once a golden gleam larger and larger, till in an incredible short space of time it

hangs suspended in the vaulted arch a mass of dazzling flame.

In this way rising early, and studying at night, the duties of the household were not interfered with; and the lessons learned were spilled out just as the sun draws up the mist in clouds to send it down again in copious showers to fertilize the earth. Saturdays were the busiest of the week, Philip taking advantage of the half-holiday to finish up the accumulated errands, and to see that everything was in readiness for another six days' incessant study.

Belle Staples was not at home. A winter in the city was opening up to her rare pictures of real life, all of which she found time to transcribe, giving May to see faint glimpses of the great world, the din and glitter of which would have not reached her but for this.

The only child of a wealthy widow, Rufus Holt had more advantages than the majority of young men: indulging his fine taste in whatever pleased his fancy, with travel sufficient to enlarge his views; appreciative, but not decided, looking forward to the days of manhood, and fully expecting at some future time to gather fruit sweeter to the taste than he had ever known.

The little green-and-gold book lay on the parlor table, and not unfrequently Rufus dropped in to bring some cunning toy to Felix, a doll to Ethel, a rare bouquet to May. Opening her books and reading with his manly voice, giving new music to the poet's words, it was pleasant to have him there, just by the table where he used to sit; his playful speech, with pictures of the outer world clearly defined. "An amiable lad," the father said: "but he wants the spur of necessity to stir him from the quiet of these dreamy days."

"Rufus is no dreamer," May returned. "No dreamer; he does but take advantage of the tide."

"Floating — not putting out his strength. Conflict is needful to the springing oak; rose-leaves do not nourish manhood. Withal of this, he is a clever lad. Your mother had a subtle skill in reading faces: she always said there was a latent power that needed but a touch to fan it into flame."

Thus the days passed, bringing in their white hands rare pictures of snow and storm and sleet, with healthful lessons won from books and toil.

"We must not forget Mrs. Belcher," said Philip, as he came from school. "I would not wonder if this last snow had filled up all her paths."

"Suppose I join you: it is a long time since I had the walk;" and May laid her hand on Philip's arm.

"If you are not afraid of the snow."

"Are you in earnest, Philip?" and a silvery laugh went floating through the room.

"As though a snowbird could be afraid of snow!" and Philip held the laughing face in both his hands.

It was a perfect day; the warm sun-rays taking away the sting, the golden javelins striking the diamond surface and flashing back in waves of dazzling light. Drawing her red cloak closely about her shoulders, with ermine hood, and mittens white and warm, May turned to see if Felix was fast asleep; and kissing Ethel's dimpled cheek, flew down the narrow track piled high with crystal.

"As you do not mind the snow," said Philip with a laugh, "we can take Deacon Stiles' wood-road, coming out into the main track half a mile above Mrs. Belcher's house."

"Just what I would like," replied May, slipping back her hood and looking at the broad expanse. In front a belt of woodland, the dark trunks rising out of a white ground, with huge arms interlaced, and branching off into delicate network, festooned with wreaths of light feathery

snow. In the background, the village, with its pointed steeples and white roofs; the blue, curling smoke rising in long spiral coils; and, far away, the cold marble gleam, sharp, and well defined against the blue beyond. One glance upward, and the pain at her heart was still. "He knew just how we leaned upon mother. He did it for our good."

"You are headed the wrong way for a ride," said Adam True, going home with Deacon Stiles's oxen and an empty sled.

"How is this, no wood?" questioned Philip.

"The deacon thought Silas Strong and Peter Skiff would be there. I waited for them — I am afraid he won't like it."

"It is not late: come back, and I will help you load;" and, turning his oxen in the snow, Adam True was on his way to the wood-yard.

"Can you hold on to a stake?" asked Adam, looking at the red cloak, without raising his eyes to the rosy, laughing face.

"I can try," answered May, standing on the wooden cross-piece and grasping the stout stake. "I never saw a more charming picture," letting her eye sweep over the great plain of dazzling white, with zigzag fences like threads of black embroidery.

The road was fringed with dead limbs, and billets of wood dropped from full loads. Soon the forest began to open with rare pictures; thickets of evergreen wreathed with snow; leafless trees, cold and drear as so much steel; mosques, minarets, and castles, with church spires and steeples.

"I can't see all of these," Adam said, snapping his whip. "Gee up, old Bright! It looks to me all the same. I like the snow; but when it comes we only have more to

do. There 's always paths to open, and wood to haul, and —"

"Don't you think that grand?" and, without seeming to heed his words, May pointed to a column of rock rising pure and white, catching the sun-rays, and looking like a wall of crystal studded with diamonds.

"If one could just have time to look at it without thinking of ever so many things to do."

A swift look shot out of May's eyes; the brightness was all washed out of Adam's face, leaving a cold gray tinge, a metallic ring in his voice.

"You go to school, Adam?"

"Some days; but I never half learn my lessons. I am always thinking of something to be done at just such a time."

"One thing after another, Adam. When we attempt too much, we end by doing nothing well."

"That 's so!" exclaimed the boy with more enthusiasm; "but what if you have to?"

"As for that, I think one might go for wood, load, and return with it, all the while thinking of lessons perhaps, because this is a mechanical service; but we could not as well reverse it. To study with profit, we must concentrate our thoughts, spending the entire mental force upon one thing."

"I could do this if I tried, perhaps;" and there was a half gleam on the boy's face, as though dimly conscious of a power never yet called into practice.

"Study strengthens the mind," continued May, "and every effort we make to overcome the natural inclination of our own hearts strengthens the good within us."

"Then if we try and succeed, it is easier to try again?" and the bright gleam deepened.

"To try, and to keep trying. Perseverance is sure to

succeed. Did you ever see anything more delicate than a snow-flake? Watch it as it falls. How light and graceful it flutters through the air! But a mass of snow-flakes present a formidable barrier: it is heavy work to plough through them."

"And so we learn a little every day, just as the snow-flakes fall — in the course of a few years it will come to a good deal," said Adam musingly.

"Try it," answered May with a calm, earnest look into the brown face. "I have an idea whatever you undertake that you can do."

There was strength in the look and encouragement in the voice; a strange influence thrilled Adam's heart, a new light dawned upon him; he was no longer querulous; he seemed to himself to have been suddenly invested with new power.

"I can, and I will;" while the hard look vanished, the brown face was glowing, and the clear gray eye sparkled with deep resolve.

The woodland was now gained; the slant rays like pink network on the yielding pavement of snow-covered chips. Eagerly Adam and Philip set about the task of loading; May adding a stick occasionally, with a sidelong glance at Adam's face.

"There! you will feel better to go home with a load," said Philip, as they piled the sled with as much as they judged the oxen could draw. "It is always well to finish what we commence."

"I am greatly obliged to you," as Adam turned his oxen homeward. "And to you," with a look at the red cloak. "I shall remember, and I shall study all the harder for what you have said."

"I am glad that we met him," said Philip, as he and May walked in the direction of Mrs. Belcher's dwelling.

"He is such a shy thing at school; I never heard him say half as many words before."

"A face that can change as his did, shows a power that only needs to be awakened."

"And his voice had a new ring in it," continued Philip.

"It made my heart ache to see his face. Has he lived long with Deacon Stiles?"

"A year or more: his mother died there."

The sun lay on a creamy bank of cloud. Mrs. Belcher's house was in sight, a thin column of smoke issuing from the broken chimney. About the low barn a few scattered sheep, with a cow pulling long wisps of hay from the brown stack. A solitary hen was standing on one leg, peering about for scattered grain; and a gray goose arched her neck and flapped her wings, floundering in a bank of yielding snow.

The door was opened by a small boy, who at once led them into the principal room. There was a bright fire on the hearth, and before it sat Mrs. Aldrich, with a large basket beside her of coarse, heavy work, and near her a young man of commanding look and appearance. In his hand was a book from which he had been reading, his thumb and finger thrust in between the leaves; his voice deep, low, musical, coming from a heart that throbbed with the sweet experience of what he was saying, and carrying warmth and cheer to the heart of his listener.

"I am not surprised to find you here," said Philip as the stranger rose to meet him. "My sister, Mr. Meade."

"May and Philip are among my best friends," interrupted Mrs. Aldrich; "and as for that, their mother was afore 'em. I did n't expect to see the schoolmaster, and all the more glad we are to have him come;" and a peaceful look settled on the withered face.

"I see your paths are freshly cleared," as Philip

looked from the window; "the brook is open lower down."

"Some of Mr. Meade's work," responded Mrs. Aldrich.

"Harvey did the most of it. I merely showed him how to do it."

"Harvey is like a new boy this winter: from hating his book he now likes it, and at home he is kind as kind can be;" and Mrs. Aldrich threw a warm glance in the direction of the schoolmaster.

The door opened, and Mrs. Belcher, with Harvey and Hannah, entered. A warm recognition greeted May and Philip, and more thanks than it was pleasant to hear.

"You must not make so much of these things, or it will keep me from coming again;" and a musical laugh went rippling over the room.

"If that is so, we will be silent as you please," returned Mrs. Aldrich; while Hannah drew a chair to the side of May, and unrolled a plan she had for going to the factory.

"It will be better than nothing, and by-and-by perhaps something else will offer;" and the round cheeks were crimson.

"It may be the best thing," returned May; "you will be near home;" then bowing her head still closer to the flushed face, "there is One who knows, and is interested in all that concerns you. He loves you, and He will show you the way, if you ask Him."

The sun was nearly down. With a slightly compressed lip, Mr. Meade reopened his book and read a selection from the Psalms; then kneeling, bore the wants of the small household up to the Great Father. There was no effort, nothing labored, but sweetly confiding as a child who loves to specify every want.

"I have never seen a winter-picture like this!" said Mr. Meade as they turned from the humble door: "the

earth and sky — the glory and majesty everywhere displayed; the loving care and watchfulness; the tiny buds wrapped in warm cradles, and the tender grass covered with a downy counterpane."

"I never know which season I like best: the present always seems the most desirable," answered May.

"This is as He would have it: the great canvas unrolled slowly. There is adaptation in all of God's works — nothing lost; the minute as necessary as the vast; the valley as the mountain; the river as the sea; the moss as the oak: each perfect and beautiful of its kind."

"I like to think it is just so with us," continued May. "He places us where he would have us."

"An abiding sense of this is what we need in order to do our best work. The ship that beats about will never make the harbor. If she would enter port, she must first move in that direction. Looking forward to the prize, we must make for it; and this is done by knowing that the path He opens for us is the very path he desires us to walk in."

The rosy stain had faded from the snow: the bronzed gate was open.

"I feel that I have been a long journey, and seen pictures that will gladden me for many a coming day," May said to her father as she leaned against the mantel and let the fire play over her half-benumbed hands and feet.

"Active or passive pictures?" asked Mr. Shippen, with a smile.

"Both, father."

CHAPTER V.

THE SEWING CIRCLE.

IT was a busy day at Deacon Stiles's: snow and sleet were not to be taken into consideration, and cold only acted as a spur. It was one of the deacon's pet theories, "If cold, work; and you are sure to be in a glow." He was, and so was Mrs. Stiles, and so was Miss Jerusha Hazard. Miss Jerusha was sister to Mrs. Stiles; and as their dwellings were adjacent, it came to be that Miss Jerusha knew little difference, coming and going, and giving directions with the same gratuitous freedom. A busy day, and, as anybody could see, a very unusal day in that orderly household. Doors were opened and shut, fires kindled, and vigorous use was made of broom and brush, and all the appliances needful to a thorough cleansing of the house.

This was Miss Jerusha's forte: getting down into the corners after fragments of dust; peering into crevices and places infinitely too small for broom or brush to enter. She liked to do this — it came natural to her. She felt better after it. And this sifting out of dirt and dust made her tenfold more eager in the scent of foibles, spots, and blemishes in the human dwellings around her.

"I declare, if anybody is n't orderly they is n't anything. I don't see how it is possible, Deacon Stiles, for anybody that is n't neat to be a Christian. I never could bear to see cobwebs and dust in the corners, and things askew. There, just look at them curtains! I declare, if I

did n't come over here and help Melvina as often as every other day, I don't know for the life of me what would become of her. Well, I suppose we have n't all the same gifts. Mother always said that I knew how to clean; and Melvina could cook, I acknowledge. I always did hate to do that; it kind of spoils the complexion, and I was fairer than Melvina." And Miss Jerusha brushed and dusted and swept, flourishing a long feather duster, and ferreting out the corners with a small air-syringe: a red cotton handkerchief tied over her curl-papers; a long, striped calico apron reaching nearly to her chin; her arms bare; while her magical black eyes sparkled and danced after the infinitesimal particles of dust floating in the sunbeams.

Miss Jerusha was a character, and Miss Jerusha's character was working itself out. She was in her element. The deacon knew this. He knew more: he knew that she would not stop till she had finished; and, knowing this, the deacon seized his hat, seized his mittens, and hurried away to the barn — hurried away to meditate on the signs of the times. Standing with his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed on dreamy-looking cows crowding into the sunshine, chewing their cuds complacently, as the well-fed cows of a deacon should.

"That's right! that's a good boy; hurry up!" and Deacon Stiles walked up to the great barn, the smothered sound of flails telling him the wide-mouthed bins were filling with golden grain. "The women-folks have a deal to do. I promised that you should help," to Adam, as he issued through the door, his blue cloth cap full of fresh-laid eggs, and his face impassive as so much bronze.

"Whew! shut the door after you! Just look at your feet!" and Miss Jerusha flew after Adam, not reaching him till he had gained the pantry and was calmly depositing his eggs in a red-and-white basket lined with soft white wool.

"No earthly need of putting 'em there! Melvina will use 'em all to-day, and as many more;" the broad face softening as she looked upon the store and thought of all the good things in which they would have a part.

"I declare, just see the tracks!" and turning, Miss Jerusha's apron caught in the handle of a bucket of skim-milk, and over it went. Nero started up with a low growl, and two gray kittens arched their necks and ran across the floor in the direction of the white stream.

"I declare!" But the cause was too evident. Miss Jerusha could say nothing more, and Adam was called to remedy the evil.

"Now for more wood; then a pail of water; and by that time I shall be ready for the eggs," said Mrs. Stiles.

"I wonder if the oven is hot? Just look, before you go out." Adam bent his face to the level of the iron door and looked into the glowing flame.

"It burns well!" echoing along the kitchen and into the pantry.

"I wonder how many will come? I just wish I knew;" and Mrs. Stiles shook out the pepper, spice, cinnamon, and cloves. "I wonder where them nutmegs are the deacon brought the other day?" and spoons and knives were still.

Mrs. Stiles looked through brown papers, and searched caddies and broken-mouthed pitchers and teapots. They were not to be found.

"I can find 'em. I was always good at finding things;" and Miss Jerusha amiably came forward, sending her sharp, bright eyes here and there. "Maybe they ain't here."

"Yes they are, laid away as nice as can be; but I can't for the life of me tell where," exclaimed Mrs. Stiles, a little impatient flutter in her usually passive voice.

"I declare, you did put 'em away!" and Miss Jerusha

drew out a small cone-shaped package. "Nutmegs cost so much now: no more than these for twenty-five cents! Better not use many, and more of something else, Melvina. You want to know how many there will be? Why, everybody will come. There 's no more popular man in the society than Deacon Stiles; and I 'd like to see anybody stay at home when his doors are open!"

The muscles of Mrs. Stiles's face relaxed, and a smile touched the red lips.

"I know there 's always a crowd; but it is fearfully cold."

"Just as though our folks mind the cold! I only hope you 'll have enough: I can't bear to have things scant, especially when everybody knows the deacon can afford it. Rufus Holt is at home; and there 's the schoolmaster; and I should n't a bit wonder — I asked Rufus if he would n't bring May and Philip and Mr. Shippen. Let me see — pretty near a year since his wife died. It is time for him to be going into society, I should say."

Adam True set down his pail of water, and stood patiently waiting the next command.

"May Shippen to be here! that 's good;" and a rare light burned in the gray eyes; the cold, brown face was luminous. "I shall see her perhaps; perhaps she 'll speak to me," ran through his brain.

"Ready for the eggs?" and Mrs. Stiles looked into Adam's face, his little, hungry heart vibrating with a sense of gladness.

"I have finished what you gave me to do."

"Bring the beater, then."

"It is here."

"Let me see you whip it to a light froth. It won't come unless you stir it brisk."

"I have done it before."

"I want it uncommon nice. If we are to have the grandees, we can't do too much."

"Do you call the schoolmaster a grandee?" asked Adam, archly.

"If he is not, there's somebody else that is. Rufus Holt ain't behind anybody, for that matter. I only wish Judge Staples was at home, and Belle. But if May Shippen comes, somebody's eyes will dance. Not another girl to equal her in our society; and some folks know it, if she does stay at home and take care of them children. It's as good as a sermon to see her come to meeting every Sunday with them little children neat and pretty as they can be. I always look round; I can't help it. It just seems as though Mrs. Shippen was right there; and Dr. Prime kind of waits, as though he was expecting she'd come in; but Mr. Shippen looks as though he knew it was no such thing. I sometimes think it won't be long till he goes; it kind of looks like it."

Thus Mrs. Stiles and Miss Jerusha worked and talked; while Adam sat with his large eyes fixed on the plate of white foam, looking and seeing a little red cloak, ermine hood, and daintily-mittened hands — listening to the words that he had listened to every day since they were uttered: "I have an idea whatever you undertake that you can do;" a great resolve lighting up his eyes, and smoothing out the clouded brow.

Adam True's mother was a niece of Deacon Stiles. Her home had been with him from infancy; and when she returned, a widow with one child, to his house to die, she made him promise to let Adam study, if so he was inclined. "His father was a clergyman, and I trust my child will live to follow in his steps."

It made little difference now — clearing the oven, beating eggs, or whatever he was called upon to do: night

was coming, and he would be sure to catch a glimpse of May Shippen's face; and if she spoke to him, he knew it would be for memory to treasure up.

The sewing circle in Wilton had been largely attended during the winter, and to-night it is to meet at Deacon Stiles's. Hence all the stir and bustle of the morning.

The sun was nearly down, and the fires sending out a ruddy heat.

"They will begin to come pretty soon," said Miss Jerusha to Adam True. "I 'll just run over and put on my black silk; it won't take me long." And for the time Adam was left to the enjoyment of his own thoughts.

Mrs. Stiles looked fresh in a green merino dress, with a white cap and pink ribbons, a smile of satisfaction on her easy, good-natured face. The deacon wore his Sunday coat, with bright buttons and a turn-over collar.

Adam had slid into his last-made pants, a pair of the deacon's: "Too small for him," his wife said, "and too large for Adam; he 'll grow to them;" and, with slight alteration, waiting for him to grow, Mrs. Stiles suggested the propriety of his wearing them on this particular evening. His vest was of one color, and his spencer of another; still his collar was spotlessly white, his hands clean, and his face radiant.

"I never knew you to be so cheery before; did n't know you liked company. Any of the folks here?" as Miss Jerusha returned.

"Not yet," answered Adam, tapping the window-frame dreamily.

"A bitter cold night." And more wood was piled on the blazing fires.

"There 's John Russel's team, and ever so many in one sleigh." And Miss Jerusha bustled about, pulling at a chair, and then placing it just where it was before.

"Go to the door, Adam." And in an instant the boy was at the horses' heads; while John Russel threw back the robes, giving each of the girls a little toss on to the doorstep.

"Come right in; you must be half frozen," said Miss Jerusha, giving her guests a hearty shake of the hand.

"Dear me, Miss Jerusha, how nice you look, and how becoming that scarlet ribbon at your throat!" And Hettie Russel slipped out of her wrappers, and curled down before the fire, very much as a pet kitten would have done.

"Don't talk about dress, child; it is easy to see that you think too much about it;" and Miss Jerusha stirred the fire with the poker, the red flame reflecting itself on her face, calling up warmer expressions from Hettie.

"Well, if you don't beat anything, Hettie Russel; but, now I think of it, where 's the schoolmaster?"

"John has gone to bring him, together with Dr. and Mrs. Prime."

There was a constant chime of bells, and Mrs. Stiles and Miss Jerusha were busy in removing wraps and putting them away. The Wilton Sewing Society was in nowise sectarian; three distinct churches were represented, and the utmost harmony had always prevailed. Mrs. Prime was the president; relinquishing her right in favor of her husband, the meeting was duly opened, the report of the secretary read, and the baskets of work distributed.

A merry ring of sleigh-bells, and another turnout reined up before the door.

"That is Rufus Holt!" exclaimed Hettie Russel; "no one else has such bells." And Adam's heart bounded as he caught sight of the red cloak and ermine hood: while Philip seized him by the hand — "Glad to see you, Adam!" — May was ushered into the cloak-room. Mr.

Shippen, Rufus, and Philip followed the deacon into another apartment.

"You can't tell how glad we are to see you!" exclaimed Miss Jerusha, as May stood before the fire, the plain, dark dress heightening the purity of her face, the tiny ruffles glistening, and the soft hair rippling away from the broad, white forehead.

"How like your mother you are growing to be!" and Mrs. Stiles pressed the red lips. "We were almost afraid you would not come, child."

"Katy seemed to feel it would be a lack of confidence if we refused."

"I am glad she did, child."

Quietly, and with genuine modesty, May Shippen passed into the large parlor, meeting her friends and her mother's friends with an easy dignity, more of the child than the woman, giving her hand freely, her eyes brimming with tenderness. Very busy it was, and very pleasant; the ladies with their needles, and the gentlemen making themselves generally useful. Dr. Wiseman was engaged with May Shippen, as she sat in one corner busily sewing. Looking up, he caught a glimpse of Adam's face.

"One of my young friends. Do you know him, May? Adam True."

"I have seen him, and I am glad to meet him to-night," raising her bright eyes, and clasping the brown hand. "Here is a seat. Tell me how the days have passed since our ride to the wood-yard."

It was the very occasion that Adam had been looking for; and, as well as he was able, he told May of his plans, and how the memory of her words strengthened him. "Mother wanted me to be a minister; papa was one."

"Do you desire it more than anything else?"

"I cannot help it."

"If it is for Christ's sake, for the promotion of His glory, and to tell dying men of His love, there is good reason to think that He will open a way. All you have to do is to ask Him to lead you in a plain path."

"I have been reading more in the Bible since I saw you. I like to read His promises — only, sometimes, I cannot think that it means me, that He will lead me and guide me, and teach me — that He will love me, forgive me, and listen to me."

"It means whoever will accept of His loving kindness; it means you in particular."

"How so, Miss Shippen?"

"When God saw best to remove your father, you leaned only the more fondly on your mother, did you not?"

"Mother was all that I had then."

"And when He sent for your mother?"

"There was no one left to love me as she had done."

"More than father or mother Jesus loved you; and when He removed your parents, it was simply saying, that He would be to you more than they could have been. God never takes anything from us without giving us something every way better adapted to our wants than we had before. I have no mother, Adam. At first, I thought I could not endure it; but there was so much for me to do, so much that I could do, and, by reading the Bible, as you have been doing, I came fully to understand that just as I went to mother for everything, just so I was privileged to go to Christ."

"You do this?"

"I try to, Adam."

"He knows everything?"

"He knows just how weak and ignorant we are, and

this is the reason that He promises us so much. He knew that we could not do without it."

"Mother said that God would take care of me. When I have felt badly, I have thought of this. Mother loved Jesus."

Suddenly busy tongues grew silent. Dr. Prime was about to read an extract from the "Missionary Herald." "It will interest, I think, and stimulate us, perhaps, in the work we have to do." And the reading was broken occasionally with suggestions and plans for usefulness.

"I would like to be a missionary," whispered Adam True. "I have no mother to feel badly if I should go among the heathen."

"We must examine well our motives, Adam. Not because we have no one to grieve over us; but constrained by love for Christ, and the desire to promote his glory in the earth."

The earnest look deepened on the boy's face, and his gray eyes burned with a tender light.

"Ask Him, Adam. It is ours to follow where He leads."

"I feel sure that a way will open. I have been a great deal happier since I thought so."

"Wherever we can do the most good, like polished stones fitting into the great temple, so with our work; obscure and hardly seen, perhaps; still it has a place. It is for us to work with actual measurement, leaving it for him to dispose of as He will."

There was stir and commotion. Dr. Prime had closed; and Adam's name was loudly called.

"Thank you, Miss Shippen," and Adam hurried away. Supper was in readiness: Rufus Holt whispering to May, as he filled her plate, "Adam's eyes fairly dance to-night. May, what magnetic attraction have you over that boy?"

"No influence, Rufus, save the love we both feel for the same object."

The air was crisp, and the moonbeams sparkled as the sleigh passed over the smooth road. The great lights burned above them. Rufus Holt was not the only one that had seen the expression of Adam's face. Mr. Shippen had caught a glance that touched his heart, and made him feel a tender interest in the orphan boy.

"He bids fair to make a scholar," said Philip.

"It is easy to see that whatever he does, his heart is in it," answered Rufus Holt.

CHAPTER VI.

HOME LIFE.

THE days were lengthening: the jewelled surface marred with unsightly spots, small white patches in the fence-corners powdered with black, and the ridges of brown road oozing with slush and filth. Spring was coming: you could see it in the relaxed muscles of the winter-king. The sceptre was falling from his hand; the rich buckles of his robe were giving way; his white head was bowed.

It was a time for memories, clustering in the heart like swallows twittering in last year's nests — a day when May Shippen's thoughts went backward; the morning crowned with rosy light, the books read, and the lessons learned. It had not taxed her heavily, sitting with Philip, and feeling more closely drawn to this young brother striving to do as she herself was doing. Many precious truths they had read together, His word a lamp, His voice to guide. It grew upon them, bringing rare sweetness for the day, throwing golden light on petty trials, and bridging chasms made by loneliness. Farther back, a sweet, pale face looks down upon her: "Take my place, comfort your father, and be a mother to these little ones."

A fine white mist covers her eyes: she has tried, and still is she conscious of mistakes — mistakes that lead her still oftener to ask guidance of Him who sees from the beginning and to the end. Conscious of defects, she acknowledges that she owes it to Him, the little that she has

done. "You are a good girl, May," dropping on her heart like balm. Not much; but her father appreciated her effort.

A sharp, quick cry of pain, as Felix climbed up to the table and upset a box of letters, clapping his dimpled hands, and showing two pearly teeth. Placing the letters one by one, the delicate chirography and daintily-perfumed envelopes touching a chord that thrills and vibrates more with pain than pleasure. From Belle Staples, and they were written in the city. May has read them: she does not care to read them now. Conscious of longings and hungering at times, to leave the narrow path, she does not dare to let her eyes wander over the field where Belle gathers flowers: she knows they are beautiful; she has sometimes murmured that it was not hers to share in the delight, to drink in the subtle perfume, lying at her ease on some flower-gemmed bank, feasting her eyes, and indulging her fancy in bright dreams. Belle Staples could do this. Not many years ago they were friends, curling their hair together, and dreaming dreams on the same pillow. Different work was given them, different paths opened to their feet; and May shut her lips with a firm pressure: she dares not ask the reason why. Friends they had been, and friends now: the one, bright, joyous, sparkling, dancing from country to city, poising herself and swinging at her ease; the other, a brown-throated thrush, singing her sweetest songs to the small brood in the home nest.

The thick cloud grew suddenly lighter. A robin perched himself on the gable, and began to trill, at length breaking out into a clear, bright, ravishing song. Only the song of a bird; but it touched her heart, and sent the thoughts rippling away to another measure. "It is the song, and not the singer; it is the life we live, and

not the place in which we live it;" and the cloud was bleached to a fair white.

There was a jar of the great gate: it could open now, and spears of grass were darting up by the side of the walk. It was Philip with his books, and Mr. Meade was with him. To-morrow will be the closing day of school, the summing up of his winter's work. A stranger, Wilton and Wilton school-house looked uninviting. How well he remembers the morning when he took his chair for the first time: the promiscuous assemblage, girls and boys, some tall, some short, all hurrying, eager for a look at the new "master:" measuring him with their eyes; some with bold, defiant glances, others meek and tender, willing to be led. A dull, gray morning, full of mist and rain. Not long, and the clouds lifted, the golden splendor lighting up corners fringed with purple gloom. Harsh voices softened; discordant natures fused into one harmonious whole; idlers turned studious. Some were climbing high. Adam True was one: the crust of indifference has fallen off; he has an aim and a purpose.

"Who ever saw such a change?" as, sitting at the fire, the talk goes round. "Such a change!" was echoed from heart to heart—a change that each was conscious of, radiating outward and touching other circles. Then talking of college life, the faces he would miss, and the years, perchance, before he would see Wilton again. While Philip seized the thread, and strung it with the hopes he cherished.

"It will be some time, a year or more, before I can go. Felix will be a big boy by that time;" and Philip stooped to hide the telltale moisture in his eyes. It is easier for boys to talk of going than to go. The bird is glad to use his wings, flying at will, just as he pleases; but let night come, with storm and darkness, and he would gladly shelter in the home nest.

"Does everybody have to go to college, papa?" and Robert climbed to his father's knee.

"Not everybody, my son: it is needful, if one means to study thoroughly."

"I mean to study; but I never mean to leave you, papa."

At tea the small housewife sat with quiet grace, while Philip praised the biscuits — "light as snowflakes" — and the boy told of a college he would found for making bread, with biscuits, tarts, and pies, and May should be president of that.

"A little too ambitious for my state," said May, with a laugh. "A president should be a person of rare dignity and worth. I would prefer to make my tarts on a smaller scale, proud to please but two or three."

"And I am one of those," said Philip, with a laugh.

"If you please, I will join you in a cup of tea," said Rufus Holt. "Had it not been for Katy, I should not have gained an entrance," the handsome face lit up with a rare smile.

"It was all May's fault," and Philip's eyes were dancing. "Only anticipating."

"What?" and Rufus sipped his tea with a bright glance at May's face.

"A college that is to be, with May for president. Have we your vote?"

"I did not know that May was ambitious for such a place;" and a questioning look stole into Rufus's eyes.

"You go too far, Sir Tease," and May shook her rosy fingers at the boy.

"A college with diplomas for good bread and biscuits, like to these," and Philip passed the plate that Kate just brought in.

"I question if it is an art that can be taught," and

Rufus caught the point of Philip's mirth. "The great rule lies deep within the heart — a will to please."

Leaving the table, conversation took a wider channel, branching off into the world of letters, politics, and men; sifting new measures, and criticising law; speaking of art, philosophy, and sense; sending thought flashing through the realm of mind, and bringing pictures new and old to look at and toss aside — for memory, perhaps.

"You close to-morrow?" asked Rufus Holt, toying with the green-and-gold book on May's table.

"To-morrow," answered Mr. Meade, a thread of sadness running through his voice. "It always made me gloomy as a boy to finish up my work."

"There is a great difference between the beginning and the end," said Rufus Holt.

"A right beginning tends to a right end;" and Mr. Shippen tossed Felix in his arms. "The sunrise, glorious and full of hope, is not more beautiful than when it sinks behind the tree-tops. The one is like youth, full of aspiration; the other, like old age, calm and content."

"There is many a glorious sunrise that sets in storm and darkness," exclaimed Rufus Holt.

"And you would argue, many a youth that promises fair sinks into obscurity before his race is half run?"

"So I should say."

"Storm and darkness are inevitable. It makes great difference where we are anchored. A firm, unyielding principle of right, and the storm may delay, but cannot turn us from the course."

"I begin to think more of this;" and there was a ring in the calm voice of Rufus Holt that touched every heart.

"The offering on the altar must be lit with no common fire," responded Mr. Meade.

"A celestial flame passing from the heart to the head, and giving a diamond-point to intellectual vigor."

As the sun went down, the air grew crisp and chill, stiffening the snow, and giving a polish to innumerable silver arrows.

"What say you to a ride?" asked Rufus Holt. "It is the last of the snow, and Mr. Meade is with us. I told Benson to bring the horses, and here he is; there is no time to refuse."

"As if we wished it!" and Philip opened the door and tossed a word to Benson in the sleigh.

"There is room for all, Robert and Ethel;" and Rufus proffered his aid to dress the little ones.

"Provided that you will allow me to hold the reins, and Benson stay to guard the fires," and Mr. Shippen laughed good-humoredly.

"I have a seat with the driver," as Rufus pointed Mr. Meade to a place by the side of May. "The next for Philip, Ethel, and Robert," wrapping them in with robes and blankets.

Mr. Shippen was a man of culture: a well-stored mind, with a heart that had profited by the lessons of His love. A good conversationalist, he was careful to improve opportunities, not allowing his grief to make him less companionable to the young spirits around him.

To take advantage of the snow, he kept to by-paths, and thus less familiar pictures opened up to them of wood and dell, valley and hill-top; with low-roofed cottages, the one taper, like a faint glowworm, lighting the room in which a woman sat swinging the cradle with her foot, her fingers pricked with thrusting the needle in and out.

"I am glad to know that a drop of comfort has fallen into her cup. Mr. Finley has remedied what he could, and they can sleep without the fear of being driven out," said *Mr. Meade.*

"A low-voiced, gentle woman," May replied. "Sorrow has refined her nature, burning out the dross."

"The legitimate use of all we have to bear is to the same effect: a spontaneous growth is not to be compared to the cultivated field. Nature hoards her wealth in mines that require force to unbar the doors: she is no miser, giving with a free hand, but not unasked."

Very still and quiet May grew: they were passing the church-yard, the headstones gleaming cold and white.

Up and down, past the large house on the hill where Rufus lived: a rosy stain on the broad windows reddening the snow outside.

Nearing the village, other turnouts met them at quick speed, with merry, ringing voices, and girlish laughter.

"Have you enjoyed the ride!" as Rufus Holt threw back the robes and lifted Ethel out.

"The best ride I ever had!"

"It is possible that we may have another;" and Rufus turned to May with a look that needed no help from words.

There was a tremor in the voice, so low it escaped every other ear, as May made reply.

Rufus Holt said nothing more.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRIENDS.

WINTER had slipped from his chair in a rage of storm and sleet, and the fair young Spring trailed her green robes over the hills and by the side of streams; her dimpled, laughing face radiant with hope; scattering anemones, violets, and daisies in the fence-corners and on the mossy banks. Cold hearts grew warm, and young spirits danced in the meadows and before open doors. Wilton looked like a huge nosegay, with every shade of color and perfume.

A pretty sight: and exultant eyes looked out while little children tiptoed on the walk to see a flower, reaching forth their hands, and pressing out the life with well-meant tenderness.

"It is a pity to have the school-house closed," Miss Hazard said to Dr. Prime, as he passed the gate. "A pity Mr. Meade went so early by a month. There 's Miss Hyacinth Starr would keep a good school; and, from what I've heard, I think she 'd like the place. But, dear! Mr. Meade is missed. A strange power he had for so young a man. Not one of his boys but almost worshipped him; and Adam True is for all the world another child. I don't see how it is" — and Miss Jerusha stooped to lift a straw from out the path — "some folks wake up all of a sudden. We always thought Adam was dull."

"Aptness to learn and quickness to comprehend are not always indicative of mental strength; our best scholars and

most able men have usually been heavy boys, in nowise distinct from their fellows."

"Well, I do hope Adam will make something; it's kind of troubled me. Poor child! he's neither father nor mother, and the deacon has had to do everything for him; and he's not much relation, only his mother's uncle."

"I cannot feel that the deacon will lose anything. Adam is certainly a very capable lad."

"There's Harvey Belcher: from being a little vagabond, as he was a year ago, they say he helps his mother, and is kind and obedient as a boy can be."

"I remember he passed a good examination; and Mr. Meade commended him as one worthy of aid. Such boys are an honor to us. We must see what can be done for them, Miss Hazard;" and, lifting his hat, Dr. Prime walked down the street, his thoughts running out on his next sermon, perhaps with strangely confused images of plants vegetable and human growing in the same garden, some straight, others gnarled and dwarfed.

Mr. Meade had gone; but the school-house was not long vacant. Outward change was visible: the circle of pupils was not the same, but the grand ultimatum was study. Study was written on the heart of the new teacher; it was being written on the hearts of the pupils. Wilton, and Wilton culture, was advancing.

Anniversaries, like milestones, mark distances. April came, bringing the birthday of Felix, and also reminding them of the great sorrow that came to them in the season of bursting buds and pink-tinted blossoms. By what a subtle thread do we cling to the past, reaching onward, and still throwing regretful glances at what has been. Felix had made one round of the ladder marked by years. Mr. Shippen had added another; and May could not

make it seem there was but one: so many experiences had crowded into this year. She did not feel old: at the same time there was a great remove from the fresh, laughing springs that had gone before. The enthusiasm of her nature had settled to a serene cheerfulness; the careless, easy life was rounding into completeness: striving to do her best, gathering the flowers that sprang up in her path; and more and more surprised, as she goes along, to find they are so beautiful, so full of dainty sweetness.

Philip is busy with farm-work, studying as he can, and reciting to Dr. Prime. Robert and Ethel go to school.

Belle Staples is at home, and hardly a day that she does not find her way to the gabled house; the light-hearted, merry-voiced girl bringing pictures of the great world to decorate May's rooms, and to contrast by no means unfavorably with those already there.

"It looks like old times to see you here," Mr. Shippen said, as the two girls walked through the hall and down the steps, their arms around each other's waist in school-girl fashion.

"I don't see but May is just as good as ever," returned Belle, with a laugh: "I was half afraid she would be old, and grave as housekeepers are expected to be."

"Does it of necessity render one old to keep house?" asked Mr. Shippen.

A light, silvery laugh twittered out and was caught up by the flower-bells.

"I am afraid it would make me old and grave, Mr. Shippen."

"On the contrary, I think it would be the very thing to keep you fresh and gay: flowers that grow in sheltered places preserve their beauty much longer than those that stand in the sunshine to be gazed at and sighed over by every breeze."

"There 's a happy medium to be preserved — neither too obscure, nor with too much sun."

"I agree with you, Miss Belle. Now tell me about this vine. Where shall I place it?"

"That depends upon what it is."

"The English honeysuckle; and I want it to cover an arbor."

"Then you will place it where it will be most favorable to its growth — at the foot of the arbor.

"Do you think it will be favorable to its growth if permitted to remain in one place? Will it not have a tendency to make it too grave?" and Mr. Shippen's eyes were brimming with mirth.

"I do not mean by this to keep you in one place," seeing the puzzled expression on Belle's face. "Circumstances of soil and position have much to do with the beauty of development. 'A happy medium,' as you say, and travel, educates as thoroughly as books. The only thing needful is to use our opportunities wisely, laying in store for future usefulness; not letting our lives evaporate, leaving for age nothing but husks."

The arbor was finished, and the honeysuckle duly planted. Mr. Shippen had gone to the field, and Philip stopped just long enough to whisper to May that the old apple-tree by the spring was in bloom.

With a few directions to Katy, May brought out the baby's cap and cloak; and, carrying him by turns, the two girls crossed the meadow to a small hill, moss-covered, violet-crowned, at the base of which, in a little rocky alcove, was a spring of cold, crystal water, gushing up, and running away in musical ripples to gladden the ferns and the fox-gloves. Jutting over the stream was an apple-tree, gnarled and bent, but thick set with branches every spring covered with bloom, and later with rich, golden

apples. It had always been a favorite resort; and, as the two girls stood by the side of the spring, their quick eyes espied a seat framed of twisted willows, light and graceful.

"Could anything be better planned? Pray, was this your suggestion?" exclaimed Belle.

"Some of Philip's work, I presume. Papa is teaching him that, if he will only take advantage of the time, there is ample opportunity to cultivate love for the beautiful, and to improve his taste."

"Studying from nature!" cried Belle, looking up through the perfumed canopy. "It will soon be gone."

"Only an exchange; in the room of pink and white blossoms it will be green and gold: if not as pretty, certainly much richer."

"Who ever saw such a practical girl?" and Belle threw herself on to the moss and looked down into the spring. "Do you remember how we used to let down our curls, laughing as we saw ourselves reflected in the water, and watching the water-sprite, as she tripped over the flat stones, scattering pearls and diamonds as she went!"

"I remember," answered May, dreamily.

"And the fairies in green dresses, with silver scarfs and tiny white slippers, dancing on the fern-leaves?" and Belle's laugh twittered in and out of the moss-cups.

"The spring is the same. Let us make believe that we are: tell me, what do you see?" and Belle drew May down to the bank.

"A veritable Undine, with eyes bright and sparkling, fond of adventure, and permitted, as a Grace, to live on the earth, where it is expected she will scatter pearls and diamonds wherever she goes."

A strange light gleamed on Belle's face, and her eyes were misty. "Those days were pleasant, May: I often wish they would come back again."

"That you might make better use of them?"

"In order that I might enjoy them with keener zest."

"Lovely as this old apple-tree is, in its pink dress, it would not be desirable for it always to remain so," returned May, pulling down a spray and tossing it to Felix.

"Of course not; apples are what we desire."

"The days of childhood are to us only the pink bloom: as we grow older, this drops off, a new phase appears, and at length the fruit."

"You make everything serious, May."

"Life has a purpose, and each day perfects it: flowers are sweet, but the crowning work is fruit; so the crowning of our life is usefulness."

"Was that what your father referred to, leaving for age nothing but husks?"

"Yes. Father says there is nothing perfected at once. The sculptor begins with a rude block: day by day he carves with his chisel, fitting and moulding, here a little and there a little. The painter has his canvas, and with his brush he adds a line, steps back, looks, thinks, and works on. The characters we have to fill out are more enduring than marble, more wonderful than painted canvas. Eternity will reveal the beauty or the deformity of the work."

"I know so little about this work, May. You always seemed to understand these things."

"Did you ever think how little I knew when mother died?"

"I thought you, as every one else did, a most capable girl."

"I can never be sufficiently thankful that I had a good mother; but there were times when I but half listened to her."

"It is not right to undervalue yourself, May. I should be proud —"

"Not that, Belle. You cannot know the mistakes that I have made; but I have tried."

"If you have made mistakes, what have I done? Compared to yours, my life has been a failure: I have done nothing, absolutely nothing — worse than nothing. I have —"

"Now you are unjust: the path marked for you and that for me are as diverse as the steep mountain-track and the smooth, broad plain."

"If marked for us, then surely we are not accountable."

"God placed us at the entrance of the path He intended we should take. There is one thing that seems to me clearer every day: wherever this path may be, it blossoms with beauty according to our desire; in other words, the rocks are not so steep, the stones so sharp, the soil so poor and cold, but blossoms of beauty will grow up — provided we scatter seed."

"Some paths look sterile, with no flowers to be seen, if, indeed, any are to be found there."

"True; there are those who travel upward, and still never sing, never stop to look at the lavish beauty that only needs to be searched out. People who go bowed down all their days, half fed and half clothed, under a cloud continually, would they only raise their eyes to His glorious face, and open their ears to the sweet music of His voice, what a wealth of glorious surprise would burst upon them! We are privileged to be children, not bondmen."

"I half envy you, May. You feel that these things are so, they are real: I cannot make them so."

"Do you examine them with a wish to understand? Do you study with a teachable spirit?"

"But I cannot feel that God stoops to all my little wants and plans. When I am perplexed and troubled with questions that I cannot answer, it never brings me the comfort, when *I go and ask Him,* that you describe."

"It must be the earnest cry of your heart, 'Teach me the way!'"

"How shall I make it the first wish of my heart?" and the face reflected in the spring no longer sparkled with mirth.

"By thinking upon the issue that hangs upon your decision. The choice is yours: an inheritance to be won or to be lost; the love of God, or the love of the world. You cannot give your heart equally to both."

"If I could only believe it to be real."

"Do you doubt this, Belle? Is there not an upward reaching in your heart, never satisfied, and always longing for something more substantial, something on which to lean?"

"This belongs to our nature."

"Fallen, sinful nature, that has need to be justified, reinstated — lost by nature, saved by grace."

The west glowed like a furnace of molten gold, a light breeze sprang up, and a tangle of apple-blossoms made Felix laugh and clap his hands; the waters of the spring rippled across the mottled bed, and the line of green deepened against the silver binding.

Belle's gaze was in that direction. With no fairies to be seen, she was thinking of the great life-work, and questioning as she never before had done. Over the meadow came Robert and Ethel; they saw the apple-tree and the two girls, and they knew the seat was there: Philip had told them it was to be a surprise.

"A beauty, isn't it?" as Ethel examined it closely, and then seated herself with an air of quiet dignity.

"We shall think all the more of the old apple-tree and the spring," said Robert, as he swung Felix to his shoulder. "A grand place when we want to study hard."

"Too pretty for that; we should be looking all the

time;" and Ethel picked up her books and followed Robert.

"Here is a mullein. Let me see if I can make a cup, as I used to do. Just as well. Drink, please; it is fit for a queen," said Belle, dipping the cup into the spring and holding it to May's lips.

The sun-rays lay on the meadow like cloth of gold. Slowly the friends walked homeward, Belle saying, as they reached the gate:

"I love you all the better for trying to do right. I never thought it cost you an effort, as it would have done me."

"I could not do the little that I have done, without His help, Belle."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMER REST.

THERE were no railways connecting with Wilton; neither telegraph wires running through and pinning it to huge piles of brick and mortar, otherwise called cities: still, modest and retiring as it was, it came to be pretty generally known that, as a resort for the summer, it had few rivals. Frequent groves of oak and maple, with springs of cool, delicious water; in the season, fruit abounded, and flowers filled the air with healthful perfume.

Mr. Shippen's house stood beyond the village, and still in view, save when the laughing, coquettish June, her lips red with strawberry stains, drew down her veil. It was just the distance to walk, and visitors were abundant.

From being accustomed to think and to act for others, May Shippen's movements were blended with a nameless charm and fascination, acknowledged by her circle of acquaintance. She never appeared to think of herself; hence there was no restraint: a charming modesty, far removed from forwardness, tempering her acts, and giving her the air and bearing of one accustomed to all the forms of social life.

With a desire to beautify the place, Philip had turned the water of a spring into a miniature lake, on which he launched a boat, with paper sails, and threads of silk for cordage. Beyond, he heaped a quantity of rough stones, filled the crevices with loose earth, set ferns and harebells,

and contrived a jet of water rising several feet, the surplus running through a rose-tipped shell, and falling in a tiny white cascade at the foot of the garden. Several hours of the day Mr. Shippen had given to building arbors, planting vines, and flowering shrubs, rendering home still more attractive.

Very pleasant it was, as the day ended, to sit in the shadow of the vines, the moonbeams resting on the lake: the paper sails and silken cordage glistening like silver, the rocky pile, with delicate, fan-like ferns, the harebells nodding to the breeze, and the light spray shooting up and falling in a tangled skein of brilliant colors: a rest and calm stealing over the soul, an incentive to noble thoughts and active purposes. For his children Mr. Shippen exerted himself, mingling lessons of wisdom with lighter talk.

"The influence of beauty is felt by every one, in a greater or less degree," said Dr. Wiseman, as he joined the group on the veranda.

"A distinguished writer tells us, 'Ideas of beauty are among the noblest which can be presented to the human mind,'" returned Mr. Shippen. "And from the manner in which our world is constructed, and the many beautiful pictures, constantly changing, with which it is hung, it would seem the Deity intended we should be constantly under their influence."

"How far love for the beautiful may be employed to promote a religious end is with me difficult to determine."

"Religion is nothing else than a true and zealous love to God in the soul."

"Granted."

"Allowing this, to lead the young soul to a full realization of the fact that God is the author of all beautiful things, that He loves beauty, and that His character is the

perfection of moral loveliness, will surely inspire the soul with love to its Maker. It is a wrong and distorted idea of God that makes him repulsive. One glimpse of his matchless perfection, and the soul bows in adoration."

"Is it not possible for us to pervert His designs by making this beauty an end in itself, rather than a means of good?"

"We can abuse this, as any other gift. Using it as a thread on which to hang all manner of costly jewels, the pearl of price is beautiful, and its surroundings should be of the same nature. It is only when art gains the supremacy that there is danger."

"Is not this love for the beautiful one feature of the Romish Church?"

"There are points in which the Church of Rome is wiser than those of a purer creed. It is one thing to appeal to the sense merely, another to look upon art as simply the framework in which His attributes are seen with added brilliancy."

"It is a pleasant theory; but I am not prepared to say just how far one may go safely. Love for art grows upon us the more we contemplate it, and I cannot but feel there is danger lest it come like a cloud between us and the one we should worship, just as in a painting we think nothing of the artist as we look upon the beauty of his work;" and the doctor drew his watch. "You remember, this is the evening to organize for the building of the new church. As you are on the committee, your theory of beauty will find ample scope in church architecture."

"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, and the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious," answered Mr. Shippen.

The children had said their prayers, and Philip had *gone to spend* the night with Rufus Holt.

"Father will be home early: with Katy here, you will not be afraid?" as Philip kissed the dimpled cheek. "I promised to be there by such an hour, or I would not go;" and Philip came back and stood by May's chair, lifting the curls and letting his hand rest for a moment on the brown head. Then he suddenly stooped and touched his lips to the white forehead. "You are all the world to us, May — to all of us;" and as suddenly left the room."

A little, stifled cry, so low that Philip could not have heard it had he been there, and May crouched down by the lattice in sight of the small lake and the boat with silver sails, the rocks, the harebells, and the fan-like ferns; and still it came from a heart that seemed to have lost something, or a heart from which something had been wrenched. "You are all the world to us, May — to all of us!" Why did he say it? and crouching lower, the moonbeams resting like a crown on the soft brown hair, the small hands pressed firmly together, and the veins on the forehead throbbing with sharp pain. Why troubled? the path is plain. Had she not promised her mother to take her place in the family? to comfort the stricken father, and to be a guardian to her brothers and sister? Must she not do it? The harebells swayed in the night-breeze, and the quivering heart swayed and struggled with itself.

Strength is born in conflict, and suffering is the white heat that separates and burns out the baser metal. God has so ordained it. The mind of man is capable of vast expansion and power, reaching up unsatisfied, and ever longing for more and greater good. In nature the process is the same. Gold comes from the bowels of the earth; marble is dragged from inner beds; diamonds are searched for with untiring zeal, and, when found, have to be cut and polished before they can sparkle in the crown. Be comforted, faint heart! The purest metals are beaten the thinnest; the

best wheat is threshed most carefully. To increase thy mental strength, God lays thee on his anvil, and beats thee that thy strength may be confirmed, thy beauty without spot or blemish. The heart is like a box of alabaster: the sweet perfume is all unknown till broken. How delicious the atmosphere, how many are made to rejoice, when, before, a simple box contained it all!

May Shippen knew all this. Young as she was, she had passed under the rod: freely she had lifted the burden; and if her slight figure swayed and bent under it, she did not once think of laying it down. But there were times when she could not keep the tears, the sweet hopes of her youth put aside; the fancies she had indulged melting into thin air. Grief matures young hearts, and life is counted by experiences, not heart-throbs. The dignity of middle age crowned her young life; the wisdom of a mother was expected to fall from her lips. In her anguish, May crouched still lower. The depths of her soul were stirred; the longings of her heart would not be denied utterance. Alone with her God, she wrestled, asking for strength, wisdom, light, that she might successfully lead others in the same path she was herself striving to walk in. Never had her soul been more thoroughly immersed in sorrow; never had it seemed so dark; never her cry been so earnest, "Father, help me, for thy great name's sake!"

"I will, my child, rest assured. I have given my word; it will not fail you. I have given my Son, my only Son, the best-beloved of my soul. Think of what He suffered in the garden! He loved thee, child! He loves thee now! Be comforted!"

Insensibly May raised her head: the moonbeams silvered the lake, the small boat, and the paper sails. There was no more struggle: it looked clear. Up the broad staircase May walked lightly: Robert and Ethel were asleep. 'A

kiss nestled on the full lips, and a low prayer went up: then to the crib where Felix lay, his soft cheek pillowed on one rounded arm, the other lying in careless grace on the white counterpane. "Teach me to do!" Kissing lips, his hair, the dimpled fingers of his chubby hand. There was a step on the veranda: she would not that her father knew how much it cost her to do right; and humbly, as one who knew her weakness, she stood before him.

"Alone, May? I should not have staid so long had I known this."

"Philip promised to spend the night with Rufus Holt. The hour was set: I would not let him stay."

"You are a good girl, May." And the lake gleamed, and the air parted with the movement of unseen wings.

"I do not know how we can live without you!"

"I am not to leave you, father."

CHAPTER IX.

SUMMER REST CONTINUED.

AS the summer deepened, May found more time to practise, while her journal was taken out, opened, and read. Years ago, her mother gave her, as a birthday present, a beautiful writing-desk duly furnished with pens, ink, and paper, and with it a journal.

"This is for you to write in every day," said Mrs. Shippen.

"What shall I write, mother?"

"Write down your own thoughts and feelings day by day; compare and revise afterward."

"It looks foolish to write this in a book."

"It may seem so at first; but, with practice, you will like it; and as a means of mental improvement, in the ease of composition, clearness of thought, and fluency of expression, there is nothing to equal it." And May did write, pouring out her heart as she could never have done in words.

Since her mother's death, and the new duties so suddenly devolving upon her, she found less time, and for months she laid it aside altogether. As she resumed it, she was surprised at the easy flow of her thoughts, and the rapidity with which she could note them down. If she had changed in other things, she also found change here, more freedom, more vivacity; a nameless fascination, rendering it almost impossible for her to sleep without it.

It was so with music: the piano stood in the front par-

lor, and for months was scarcely opened. Mrs. Shippen was a lover of music, a sweet singer, and a fine player on the instrument. May had been taught carefully; but Felix required her constant attention, and there was a fear that something would be neglected, to say nothing of the sorrow as she raised the polished lid, and ran her fingers over the keys that had so often thrilled under her mother's skilful touch.

One year of experience in housekeeping, and the yoke was easier. Felix was strong and healthy, and Katy loved him and found ample time to amuse him.

"I am glad to see that you find time to practise," Mr. Shippen said. "We must all sing more." After this, there was not a day without regular practice, and not an evening without songs and hymns.

The wave of city visitors swept back to the mountains, taking Belle Staples with it. Rufus Holt had gone with his mother to Montreal, and quiet brooded over the spring and the willow seat under the apple-tree. Occasionally May led Felix to the mossy bank, clapping his hands and seeing his little, chubby face reflected in the spring, while May sees only granite hills lifting themselves to the clouds, with Belle's face looking out from moss-lined corners, laughing and murmuring words of admiration.

"If it would only lead her to think of the Author!" whispers May, half aloud; and, before she is aware, the noise and din of a city is around her, and one she sees come and go: there is no mistaking the look and face so noble, and still with a certain air of restlessness. Why should she think of it? and, drawing her hand across her eyes, May looks once more into the spring, plays with Felix, and thinks of the Undine, light, graceful, winning—running away to the ferns and the fox-gloves, dropping pearls and diamonds as she goes. No longer a little girl;

but she folds the silvery mullein-leaf into a cup and drinks just as she used to. When hardly bigger than Felix, her mother brought her there, sitting under the apple-tree, learning lessons that gave her pleasure to recall.

A shower of golden arrows piercing the moss-cups warns her of the time. Pleasant as it is, and far away as her thoughts have wandered, they are quickly back as she thinks of her father and Philip. She knows how much they lean upon her, how desolate the rooms look when she is away. This knowledge makes her humble and very patient. Their happiness is dearer to her than her own: and the spring and the mossy bank under the apple-tree are for the time forgotten.

Down the lane Philip with his cows, whistling as he goes, merry as a blackbird or a bright-eyed vireo; his straw hat flung back, and the wind tossing his dark curls. Bess is a favorite, and Ethel pats her smooth sides and feeds her with crusts of bread. The sun looks his last from a broken bank of clouds, and the fountain gleams like liquid crystal; the purple grapes gather sweetness in the sunshine, and the tawny melons take a deeper stain. The oxen are unloosed, and the rest of the night begins.

Mr. Shippen has been to the post-office, and his hands are full of papers, magazines, and letters. Confined as he is to his home and to his farm, it does not of necessity confine his mind to the same narrow limit. A vivid description of a country makes us almost as well acquainted with that country as the traveller himself. The city can be outlined on the pages of a book, and the people, busy, active, elegant, and gay, take shape and form under the skilful touch of the narrator.

Belle Staples's pictures are life-like representations: the glory and majesty of the hills, green to the summits, or white, cold, glittering, cloud-capped, and marvellous in

their beauty: the sunrise and sunset gorgeous in coloring, and the storms terrible in their power, and with a certain awe and veneration.

There is another; but May does not care to open it, a faint color tinging her cheeks as her father places it in her hand. Timidly the lids droop, and her fingers tighten over it. It does not come from the mountains, and that is the reason, perhaps. Belle's pictures are so real she would not have them lose their freshness or be tossed too hastily aside.

Felix has said his prayer, following May word by word, his hands clasped, and his eyes raised reverently; the white lids are folded over the blue eyes, and May's kiss is blended with a prayer. Once more she turns, passes her hand across his brow, presses her lips to his cheek, and goes down. Robert is sending his boat over the lake, and Ethel is freighting it with toys, with a tiny doll seated under a canopy of purple silk. The moonbeams dance and glitter, and the open rooms grow beautiful in the dim light.

Noiselessly Philip opens the piano and runs his fingers over the keys — a few simple chords, but touchingly sweet and tender. His mother taught him these, and in the silvery silence he can almost bring himself to hear the fluttering of wings, to feel the touch of her hand, to listen to her voice. Philip loved his mother, and her death, while it saddened and left him half-benumbed, made him a better boy. Earth has to be broken before her wealth is known; and hearts have to be crushed, like rose-leaves.

"Some of Beethoven's music, May;" and Mr. Shippen's voice floated out from the veranda.

Presently there sounded down the hall a sweet, tender strain, full of frolic fancy, then deep-toned, solemn, and grand, lifting the soul up and holding it on the matchless wings of melody: then another, strung to a different

measure, the adagios and scherzos following each other, keeping the soul in poise, blending joy, hope, and holy aspiration in strains of bewildering sweetness.

"You have a rare power of interpretation," said Judge Staples; and May became suddenly conscious of an accession of listeners. "Beethoven has always been my favorite. I remember, when at Bonn, the interest awakened as I listened to anecdotes and incidents connected with his boyhood — the mortifications and perplexities that beset him; showing that genius does not exempt mortals from the annoyances that belong to ordinary life."

Judge Staples was a man of culture. Several years he had passed in Europe, gleaning knowledge with a quick, appreciative mind. He had looked upon works of art, and revelled in the pleasures of social life; and he returned with intellect improved, taste refined, manner unobjectionable; but with his religious principles weakened: the spell of unbelief, like a blighting mildew, was upon him. His Bible was laid aside for the works of Spinoza, and the speculations of French philosophy occupied his leisure. Still, he was a brilliant talker, a bold, vigorous thinker, with a lively sense of the beautiful, and a fancy often blooming into rapture. As a word-painter he excelled, winning the attention of his hearers, and holding them by the matchless skill he displayed in throwing around the most ordinary subject the iris hues of a persuasive eloquence. On the side of the dominant party, he had risen in his profession, and had been made a judge, a title that suited his fine physique and brilliant attainments.

"A pity to see a man so nobly endowed beating about in the sea of speculation; conscious that he is mortal, and still flattering himself that the Bible is a myth, the future a dreamless sleep," said Mr. Shippen, as he entered the parlor.

"And, father, I am afraid that Belle is leaning that way. If I could do anything for her!"

"You can pray for her, my child."

"And for her father!" echoed May.

That night May's journal was unopened. Blind with tears, the letter crushed in her dimpled hand, she knelt by the casement: the moonbeams twisting themselves into silver network; the far-off sapphire pricked through with diamonds.

A struggle was going on in her heart, a temptation battling for the mastery. Hours pass: the stars begin to pale, and the silvery crescent hides her face. Low sobs blend with the night air.

Soft and sweet the lone night-bird trills her song. Sad as it is, there is a strain of elevation, a thread of gratitude. It touches the heart of the weeper. Rising in the strength of a new resolve, she opens her Bible — the Bible that her mother gave her, the margin filled with pencil-marks, the fly-leaves scored with her own thoughts. As she reads, her eyes brighten.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

"For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee: Fear not, I will help thee.

"Fear not; for I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by my name. Thou art mine."

In her weakness, she grasped the hand reached down to save her, and the strength of His arm bore her out of the depths into which despair seemed about to plunge her.

What a precious privilege! A Friend able and willing to save to the uttermost!

CHAPTER X.

INDIAN-SUMMER DAYS.

THE fields were dotted with shocks of ripened corn. The apple orchard was full of golden fruit. Robert and Ethel had a permit to stay at home, filling baskets, and helping Philip load them into the cart; then a ride across the fields and by the spring. The ferns were brown and sere, notwithstanding the water tripped past their door. Over the hills the Indian maid, her cheeks brown with the sun, and her long hair flowing; the rich broideries of her robe blending with colors that harmonized, and her brown moccasins beaded with blue and gold. A rich perfume was in the atmosphere—a sweet, pure calm, in unison with dreamy fancies and floating vagaries of the brain.

May finished her morning's work, and Katy looped back the curtains and placed the sewing-chair beside the work-table.

"You like these days?" May said, as she stood in the open door, looking up through the veil of blue.

"I always feel easier when there's so much outside," returned Katy.

Felix lay asleep on the carpet, his toys scattered. Tenderly Katy put him in his crib; and then to the kitchen, a weird song floating into May as she sits at the window with her work and book. Only yesterday a letter from Belle Staples; and it lay so temptingly on the work-box May could not resist the wish to read it again; the grandeur of the hills looming up before her, the brown valleys

threaded with silver, and the distant forests gorgeous in color.

Coming down from the heights, she follows Belle to the city, looks upon works of art, listens to rare music, and mingles in the drawing-rooms of wealth and fashion.

"As busily at work as ever," and Miss Hazard stands in the door. With a quick flush, May met her, dropping her letter as she went.

"Let me sit here—I like the view;" and Miss Hazard flung herself into a camp-chair beside the door.

"What have you been doing? we only hear from you through Adam True. Miss Belle, I suppose?"

"She will return soon. Here is a letter from her," lifting the missive to the table. "She has enjoyed the summer!"

"Of course she has; the only wonder that you did not go with her."

"My work seems to be here, Miss Hazard."

"Your work does, I know. It does not hurt anybody to run away sometimes."

"That depends upon what we run from."

"Recreation is a Christian duty."

"The Christian finds recreation in duty."

"There's a difference in opinion. What's duty to one, isn't duty to another."

"We are to be guided by conscience."

"Really, May, wouldn't you like to have gone?"

"If I had seen the way clear, I would have liked it very much."

"Then why didn't you go?"

"I was needed here."

"Fudge! Just as though somebody else couldn't have done as well!"

"I am doubtless conceited; but I hardly think my place could be filled by another;" and there was something in

the tone that led Miss Hazard to change her plan entirely.

"Really, you should hear Adam True talk of this place. He thinks it a paradise."

"A gleam of water would add greatly to the beauty," answered May, quietly.

"It takes Judge Staples to talk about these things. You see him occasionally?"

"He calls. Judge Staples is a fascinating man."

"If he was only religious," returned Miss Hazard.

"I have been told that he is skeptical. He never touches upon this, however."

"Your father is not a man that he could influence. He is not so scrupulous with regard to some others. I have been told that he has won Rufus Holt entirely. By the way, has Rufus any idea of selling out?"

"I have heard such a rumor, and it is not improbable. Mrs. Holt's friends live in Montreal."

"I was told that he is going to England for a year or two."

"It is very probable."

"Well, I can only say I'm sorry. Rufus is a nice young man, a little wild perhaps, and, I'm afraid, inclined to be skeptical—a pity, a great pity, if it is so. He'll be missed in Wilton, if anybody is; and so will his mother, for that matter."

"A family to be missed, certainly."

There was no tremor in the voice, no heightened color. Miss Hazard was nonplussed. She had come out with a thread of gossip, on which she intended to string a history. She found nothing, and there was a quiet dignity of look and manner that forbid questioning. Changing her tactics, Miss Hazard professed to be deeply interested in the children, giving advice, and hoping to win confidence in return. Strictly polite, the barrier between them did not

grow less; and before it was time for Mr. Shippen and Philip to come in, Miss Hazard had gone — her ball not any larger for the afternoon walk.

Rare, beautiful days! The sun softened; but not obscured by light transparencies of cloud and vapor. "Just the days for forest walks and nutting-parties," Adam True said, as he reined up at the gate.

"It is too far to walk, and the deacon gave me permission to take Gypsy."

"It is the very thing we have wanted," returned May, "if Felix has no objection," and she tossed a glance to the small boy.

"I shall take it ill if Felix has anything to say;" and laughing and gurgling, the baby was caught up by Katy.

"We shall need baskets, and a bag," said Philip; "and what else? I have not been nutting for years."

"Many?" questioned Robert, with an arch smile. "You will have to make haste, or I shall overtake you. Miss Hazard says that I am bound to be somebody, if I keep on."

"Miss Hazard is an oracle. Is she to go with us, Adam?"

"Miss Hazard has not the good fortune to be home today. If she was, there would have been a veto, you may be sure. Miss Hazard is prudent, extremely prudent, and her prudent suggestions to the deacon would have done away with the ride, to say nothing of the nuts."

It was just the day, and Gypsy trotted down the brown road showing something of the spirit of her race. A rare day for Adam True, and he handled the reins with a sudden sense of responsibility, looking to the bars of gold overlying the road, and shunning the stones and rough places; the talk going on with merry peals of ringing laughter.

"That was a ride I shall never forget," as Philip touched

upon the empty sled and the load of wood. "It seemed plain to me after that; I knew that a way would open, and I was willing to wait."

The shadow of the oaks was around them. Philip sprang to the ground, lifting out Ethel and May, while Adam unloosed Gypsy, leaving her free to crop the crisp grass; and slipping the baskets over their arms, they wandered away in the direction of the lowest trees.

"Look out for your heads!" as Philip perched himself in one, and Adam ascended another. Ethel soon filled her basket — an expression of disappointment settling on her rosy face.

"They are so thick there is no fun in it. If I was only up there with you, Philip!"

"If you can climb like a squirrel;" and Ethel saw there was possibility in the tone.

Robert was in one of his moods; the bare idea of impossibility was sure to rouse him to more than the limit of boyish adventure.

"You can make a stepping-stone of me little sister;" and before May was aware, Ethel had mounted to his shoulder, and Philip was reaching down his hand.

"Bravely done! little sister," and Robert made a quick movement to escape the pelting shower of nuts.

"It is a pity we did not bring a lunch;" and to make amends, Robert found a flat stone and began hammering away at the nuts. Adam shook his tree till every leaf quivered; then came down to find the baskets full, and May sitting a little apart, looking up through the trees, and thinking of the wisdom and goodness, uniting strength, beauty, grace — giving such protection to the nut, ripening in its season, and falling to the ground as the wind sweeps the branches.

"I like to think that He made them for us," said Adam.

"I never thought much about it till you told me; and since, I never see a flower, or a leaf, without thinking how careful He was to make the earth beautiful."

"The more we think of this, the more shall we love Him; and this love is the groundwork on which we build — our hope here, our hope hereafter."

"Do you remember the verse you gave me? 'Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.' I used to be afraid that He would be displeased if I asked Him too often."

"Was your mother displeased because you made her your confidant, telling her every wish of your heart? Did she dislike this?"

"She liked to have me: I could see it in her face."

"The mother may, through impatience or illness, repulse her child; never any feeling but love stirs the heart of the Redeemer. 'Come unto me,' is His language; 'whoever will, let him come.'"

"I wonder I did not always see it so."

"He will open a path, rest assured of this; the path in which He wishes us to walk. How sweet it is to think that the choice rests with Him."

"I don't suppose I can stay much longer," and a tear fell on Adam's brown hand.

"It is not late," and May gave a swift look westward.

"I did not mean that. I am not to stay much longer with Deacon Stiles. If I want to study, he says it will be necessary for him to have somebody else; and Miss Hazard told me yesterday."

"What did she tell you?" May was compelled to ask, repenting the next moment that she had done so.

"She said it was a sin for a boy to stay with Deacon Stiles and not do any more than I did."

"Miss Hazard has never given much time to books.

There is some excuse for her: habit is strong, and she has the experience of years."

"If I go away, I shall miss you; and Philip has helped me so much."

"If you go away, you will write and tell me how you get along; the improvement you make in your books; the obstructions that call for patience; all, and everything that interests you."

"If you will allow me."

"I have learned, Adam, that it is only when God takes away all our props that we look to him as our best Friend. I leaned upon mother. I had no will, no thought but centred in her. God saw this, and in mercy called her home, that her children might rest in His care: going to Him for counsel, for guidance. Is it not sweet to think that He will lead, that He will guide us with His own hand?"

"I do not realize it as I would like; as I hope I may. And still, I feel that He will care for me."

"Go to Him freely. Go just as you did to your mother. Ask Him for everything that you need. Depend upon Him for everything. Believe that He will fulfil His promises. You desire to study: ask Him to open the way, and do not hesitate when He leads you to the entrance of a new path. Do not be satisfied with reaching up your hand. Ask Him, entreat Him, to hold you in his powerful grasp."

"This feeling has come to you since your mother died?"

"At first there was only wild, rebellious feeling in my heart. I could not see the justice, to say nothing of the love. Still, I was determined to do all that seemed necessary to do: I did it for my mother's sake. I read my Bible because she gave it to me; and I knew that I could only be happy by knowing in myself that I had done all I could. Now, there is a feeling of rest in Jesus. I realize His presence as I go about the house; and when I do for the

children, and for father, I feel that He is near me. And in the silence of my room He comes to me, lays His hand on my head: 'My grace is sufficient for thee;' and when, in my ignorance, I know not what to do, He tells me."

"This is the confidence I need."

"Tell Him so; He will sweetly fold His arms about you, just as your mother did.

Philip swung himself down from the tree, and Ethel, with a spring, landed in his arms."

"A good exhibition of faith," said May. "Philip told her to jump, and he would catch her. She did so. Jesus holds out his arms, and says, 'Come.' Let us put the same faith in Him that Ethel did in Philip."

"Allow me to pass the refreshments," and Robert lay a paper of nuts, nicely cracked, in May's lap; at the same time shaking out the purple bells of fox-glove with a stalk of flame-colored orchis. "More for the eye than the stomach. What say you, little sister? Did you get anything to eat in your sky chamber?"

"I could live there all the time: I only wish we could come again."

"You will have to give me something, if I am to be step-ladder," and a merry laugh rang out.

Adam had Gypsy in harness, and Philip was lifting in the baskets.

Bars of gold were no longer to be seen; the brown road grew dusky. Mr. Shippen met them at the door, and Felix was loud in his welcome.

"You have brightened the day for us; we are much obliged to you," said May.

"My whole life will be brighter," and brushing the back of his brown hand across his eyes, Adam gathered up the reins.

The journal occupied more than usual time that night.

Alone in her room, May went over the new lesson she had learned—the lesson she had tried to teach Adam True. Slowly the pen slipped from her fingers, and resting her head on her hand, she looked out into the night. There was crispness in the air, notwithstanding the heat of the day, and the stars glittered with added brilliancy.

Hours passed: the majesty of the heavens paled before His great love. May could only see the bowed head; the sharp thorns piercing the tender forehead; the bleeding side, the lacerated hands and feet. "All this for me!" and her hands were pressed over her eyes. "What is my sorrow to His? my love so weak and faint, my trust but half given."

Gradually the sobs ceased, and the clear eyes looked up. The beauty of the heavens was above her; the beauty of His countenance shone round about her.

CHAPTER XI.

WAY-MARKS.

THE winds swept down from the north with a power that sent the leaves whirling, piling them in corners, and tossing them in at the windows, and about the doorways. It was a season of renewed activities, aud pleasant reunions. Belle Staples was at home, and as usual, a circle of friends, lively, gay, chattering.

The brown house, with its antique gables and quaint cornices, had been full of merriment. The spring had been visited, and many a laughing face looked into the water; while others carved their names on the apple-tree, and spun golden thread, as they rested on the mossy bank.

Into this scene of merriment Rufus Holt came — and went: leaving the brown earth cold and dreary, the trees leafless, and the sky black with clouds.

"Very strange! very strange!" and the good people of Wilton shook their heads. "It is to be hoped he has not fallen into bad company." "No good comes of it when a young man has as much spending money as Rufus Holt," said another; while a third feared the views he had imbibed — the smattering of German metaphysics and French philosophy had undermined his principle. On the strength of these expressions, Miss Hazard ventured a walk to Mr. Shippen's; but the quiet of that household was not in the least disturbed, and she had not the courage to put the question she had taken such pains to ask.

About her household ways May Shippen went; and if

there was a change, it was only seen in the subdued beauty of her face, a softer light in the violet eyes, a lingering sweetness in the voice, that made one long still more to hear it again. If possible, the family at the gabled house were more closely knit together. A calm, thoughtful tenderness crept up into Philip's face; a quick perception, causing him to shape his words and acts with greater care; while Mr. Shippen's eyes followed May with a warmth of love not seen before.

"Clear-starching, little housewife!" and Belle Staples entered. "How is this, and Thanksgiving so near?" and Belle perched herself on the table.

"Katy does not always succeed with starched clothes, and father is a little particular with his linen," patting the snowy bosom, and giving it a snap with her dainty fingers.

"I declare, May Shippen, you seem to have a knack with everything about a house! I do believe you was born with it; for it certainly cannot be acquired."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes; for I have tried."

"With mother, and Nancy, and Margaret to fall back upon! We are so constituted that props must all be removed before success will crown our efforts — even in clear-starching."

"Now don't begin one of your lectures, compelling me to acquiesce, and still not quite winning me to settle down to steady habits;" and the laughing girl pictured the home that she was sure to have; closing with, "I do not intend to step into it before the time."

"If necessity is laid upon you?"

"Time enough for that when we are old."

"'When we are old' may never come to us, Belle. More die young than live beyond the period of middle age."

"A truce to such gloomy thoughts. What do you suppose brought me out so early?"

"A walk in the wind, to redden your cheeks for the evening!"

"Not at all;" and Belle followed the iron as it slid up and down. "I came to ask you to take your Thanksgiving dinner with us."

"Thanksgiving is to be a great day with Katy. Father says anniversary days — Thanksgiving and Christmas — are way-marks, when we pause, and look back. Last year, we had Mrs. Belcher and her family; and now Katy is privileged to bring her mother and her little, crippled brother."

"Then you cannot come?"

"It will be at the expense of Katy's happiness!"

"Father will be disappointed. He says that he is tired of my friends; and to tell the truth, we do make a good deal of commotion. I hardly know about leaving him for another summer; he came out here too frequently."

"We did not think so."

"There is but one topic on which you would be likely to differ; and that — oh, dear! May, I do so wish I knew which is right;" and there was a serious look, an earnest, pleading tone, altogether new to Belle Staples.

"There is One to ask; One to tell you, Belle."

"I am going to do it, May; but not quite yet."

"It is dangerous to delay, Belle."

"One winter is not so very long."

"Long enough for many changes."

"I have promised. Don't look so serious, May. Just one winter; and then —"

Dark clouds had gathered; and the rain began to patter on the windows.

"It will be something more than a shower," said Belle,

with a touch of her old manner; "to be prompt is a virtue. You see that I am beginning to mend my ways." And borrowing a shawl, she went out into the rain.

"I shall not allow you to do all my work; and next week I shall try harder than ever;" and Katy stood by the table.

A pleasant smile was on May's face, going far toward lightening the burden of the uncomplaining serving-girl.

It did prove to be something more than a shower; and for a time, May could do little but watch the stream pouring down the gutter, the wind spreading it occasionally into a thin white sheet.

Down the street she caught the glimpse of a woman wrapped in a long black cloak; the wind and the rain directly in her face. Making what headway she could, it required some time for her to reach the gate. Quickly the door was opened, the wind driving in with redoubled force.

"Mrs. White! Pray, how came you out in such a storm?"

"My poor man has fallen from the great beams, and broken his leg. There was nobody to send, and I came to know if Philip would go for Dr. Wiseman?"

A perplexed look crept up to May's face. Philip was not at home; and Mr. Shippen and Robert had gone into the village. Mrs. White saw it; and her countenance fell.

"You must go directly home, and I will see that Dr. Wiseman is there as quickly as possible," replied May. There was strength and encouragement in the voice; and Mrs. White started.

"I can go faster than you can," May said, as Katy came forward. "Bring down my water-proof and overshoes."

"No, indeed! I am more used to the rain; I shan't mind it." May was decided; and bringing the hood

closely around her face, she began to pick her way, keeping near the fence to shield her from the wind, that came in unsteady, fitful gusts, with sufficient force to almost lift her from her feet.

Dr. Wiseman was at home; and seizing his case of instruments, he was soon on his way; leaving Mrs. Wiseman to care for May.

"See that she changes her dress; and give her something hot to drink. Ten to one, I shall have to trot up to Mr. Shippen's twice a day to pay for this;" and the doctor nodded to the dripping figure on the hearth.

"It will not injure me; I am accustomed to exposure."

"It was just like you to do it; and now that it is done, we must see, as the doctor says, that you do not suffer from it;" and Mrs. Wiseman brought out a chintz wrapper, with daintily embroidered slippers; wringing out the brown curls that had slipped from under the hood, and twining them caressingly over her fingers.

"We have been wanting to see you; but had no thought of your coming in this plight."

"There was no one else;" and May was glad to seat herself; her face pale, and her lips blue and pinched.

"Dear me! you should not have exposed yourself in this manner."

"It is nothing. The wind made it hard;" and May lay her head back against the ruby cover with a sense of rest. The fire sent out a genial glow; and the air was sweet with the perfume of fresh-blown flowers.

The storm had abated when Dr. Wiseman returned.

"You never did a better act;" as slipping out of his wet clothes, he drew his chair before the fire. "The poor man was suffering intensely; his wife helplessly wringing her hands, and the little children crying piteously. It seems that he was threshing; and wanting fresh sheaves, he climbed

733738

to the great beams, falling through a trap loosely covered with straw."

"I thought how I should feel if it was father;" and a tear balanced on the long lashes.

"And now you must think how your father will feel if you are not as well to-morrow;" and the doctor poured a few drops from a vial, and gave it to May to drink.

"I saw your father as I went out, and told him, when it was fitting for you to go home, I would take you."

"Indeed, Dr. Wiseman, I am very well able to walk."

"I have no wish to lose my Thanksgiving dinner—which I shall be sure to do, if I allow you to exert yourself any more to-day."

One would have thought it weeks, in the room of hours, since May left. Mr. Shippen lifted her from the carriage, and Philip rolled the easy-chair to the corner of the fireplace. "You are a good girl, May," as the father leaned over her; and the children pressed eagerly around her with caresses, and words of endearment

The next morning it required longer time to dress than usual. May was conscious of a headache; and her limbs were racked. Making the effort, she went down in time to help Katy with the breakfast; trying as well as she could to keep up, and at last obliged to take the lounge. Lying there, and giving directions to Katy; Felix patting her cheeks, and kissing her fondly.

"Just as I thought it would be;" and Dr. Wiseman opened the parlor door. "Katy told me I might come in."

"A headache, Dr. Wiseman; that is all;" and May attempted to rise.

"I shall consider you my patient, for the reason that I gave you yesterday; and my first command is, that you remain where you are."

"I can hardly understand why that little walk affected

me at all unpleasantly; you know that I am accustomed to exert myself."

"I presume that you had been exerting yourself all the morning; the force of the wind rendered the walk tenfold harder than it would have been ordinarily; and this, coupled with the sympathy you felt, was more than you could bear. Let the day pass quietly, and to-morrow all will be right."

"To-morrow will be Thanksgiving."

"You are afraid of losing your dinner."

"Yesterday and to-day were set aside for preparation."

"Katy must do that."

"Katy is the one to have company, and I would not disappoint her."

Thanksgiving came; there was a turkey, notwithstanding May did not see to it. Katy seemed suddenly to be gifted with quickness, that made ample amends for experience.

To Mrs. Brown and Alfred, it was a way-mark from which they were to date pleasant memories. The little, odd-looking woman, dressed in quaint fashion, and with the air of one who had struggled to keep the wolf from her door; her eyes following Katy, and evidently feeling that she had made a great accession to her store of knowledge: while Robert and Ethel, together with Philip, exerted themselves to make it pleasant for Alfred; showing him the stereoscopic views, explaining the country, the people, the customs; the bright eyes of the deformed boy lighting up, and his entire face radiant.

"It's not much that he has at home, poor child; I feel thankful to you for giving him something pleasant to remember;" and the tears rolled down Katy's cheeks.

"It is a day in which we are all to be thankful, Katy. God has been exceedingly good to us; He is the one we must thank."

"But so often I've seen Alfred's face pinched and blue, hungering for something to look at, as well as for the morsel to eat: for if I do say it, Alfred has as pretty a face as and child; and it changes just like the sunshine, when he has anything pleasant to do."

It was a long speech for Katy, and she twirled the corner of her white apron in her restless fingers.

After dinner, May played, and hymns were sung.

"Do you love music?" asked May, as the tears ran down Alfred's cheeks.

"Yes; and the tears will come when I hear it. I try to play myself; but it won't sound just as I want it."

"Alfred's father could play; the boy takes after him," ventured Mrs. Brown.

As they left the instrument, May said to Alfred, "You love beautiful things, and I am to give you a handsome little Bible to have for your own; and you can read it whenever you are tired and lonesome."

"Oh! the beautiful book!" exclaimed Alfred.

"It is full of beautiful sayings; and it is bound beautifully; and you must read it every time you feel badly."

"I will read it every day, and all day; for I am all day feeling badly."

"You see, Alfred is not strong; and then he has nothing but the old viol, and it's worse for carrying around, Miss;" and Mrs. Brown's words came in fragments, and with evident embarrassment.

Katy was permitted to see them home, and to remain the night. In their humble room, Mrs. Brown, Katy, and Alfred sang a new song, as they looked at the small book; unknowing what a treasure they possessed, but still prizing it as the offering of friendship, and resolved to read it every day. With such a treasure, the humblest home is brightened. When Alfred Brown went to sleep that night, the velvet-covered book was in his hand.

CHAPTER XII.

HOME-LIFE—THE RIDE TO HOLDEN.

THE brown earth was wrapped in a sheet of dazzling white; the dusky line of fence indefinite, and the steel network of leafless tree-tops powdered with snow. Robert and Ethel were in school; and Philip studying harder than ever. A new purpose was ripening in his heart; a great life-work taking shape and form. Hitherto he had loved study for the delight it gave him; opening up to him pictures of the olden world; bringing him into companionship with the illustrious of all ages; lifting him up to a platform from which he could survey kingdoms, and powers, and states rise and sink with the ease and rapidity of the moves on a chess-board.

Since his mother's death, a deeper responsibility had rested upon him. He felt that something was demanded for the talent he had received; that a return must be made for the advantages of home and culture. Thinking of himself—of what he was, and of what he was expected to be—his energy was stimulated. There was an aim, and a purpose leading upward. Philip Shippen was not one to retain a part; the offering that he would make must be the whole—time, talents, health, and every social influence. His work must engage every thought and feeling; and this work must be for Christ.

"I shall study for the ministry," said Philip, as he talked with May of his plans. "I never thought to do this; I hardly know how it came about;" and he dropped his

head into his hand, and sat looking earnestly into the dying embers.

"I would esteem it a greater honor to be a successful laborer for Christ than to be a crowned prince," replied May. "To save a soul from death! What has the world to equal it?"

Mr. Meade was no longer in Wilton; but Mr. Ashton was from the same college; a good scholar, and a deep thinker, with the same great life-work before him. Adam True was missed from his seat; and Deacon Stiles was successful in finding a boy more devoted to labor, and less given to books.

"After all, we miss him," Miss Hazard said; "there is no denying he was uncommon handy; and a pleasanter, more obliging boy there never was."

If Philip was studying harder than before, May was fully resolved to keep pace with him; the old habit of rising early was strictly adhered to, and the evenings were filled up with a course of reading from the best authors. After this, music; and then her journal.

"I never before realized winter," said Robert, as he stood with his back to the fire; "it makes one appreciate a good warm room to be out in the cold."

From his infancy, Robert had shown an uncommon fondness for pictures—lying on the carpet for hours, with pictures for playthings; and, as he grew older, using his pencil with a skill acquired by others through exercise and study. This winter his time is given to snow figures, and there are two beside the gate, that challenge admiration.

To gratify him, as well as to foster and bring out his talent, Mr. Shippen gave him permission to try with plaster, moulding and shaping according to his conception. Judge Staples was more at home; and occasionally he spent an evening with the Shippens—always sure to touch upon art,

and the masters in painting and sculpture. In this way, Robert learned much; his innate perception and love of the beautiful running out to meet hints and suggestions; borne up on the influence of the hour, and working into forms however rude, but with a certain stamp of beauty that bid fair to develop into perfectness.

Notwithstanding their numerous engagements, Alfred Brown was not forgotten: books were placed before him; and the avidity with which he opened them, the intense earnestness with which he studied, was a convincing proof of the talent he possessed. As he had taught himself to write, May gave him a journal, showing him her own, and remarking upon the benefit to be derived from its daily use.

"He will just be putting everything in the book, and I shall be after hearing him no more," said Mrs. Brown. "A good boy is Alfred; don't be giving him the book, and making him forget his old mother, child."

In vain May endeavored to explain; it was that he might express himself with still more beauty; and writing a little every day would be a pleasant change. Once every week Philip went to his home to listen to his recitations, and to explain whatever was obscure or difficult; and every Saturday he was privileged to come down, stopping to tea, and Katy to go home with him. A new life was opening to Alfred Brown, the blossom of which will surely be followed with rich, rare fruit.

Mr. White was able to walk without his crutches, and still he was not strong enough to labor. Finishing her morning lessons, May was often seen walking in that direction, and never without her basket.

"It is hard to be poor, unable to work, and with little children to cry for bread," she said to her father; and many a lesson of patient trust was learned, resting in His care; and still anxious to do, reaching out her hand to the

poor and destitute, and pointing the weary to a place of rest.

With Harvey Belcher a year had made great difference; a tall, manly youth, a comfort to his mother, and to his little brothers and sisters.

If Mr. Meade's influence was the first incentive, Dr. Prime had fostered it, mindful of opportunities to stimulate the boy, possessed of truly good qualities of heart and brain; but dwarfed and stinted by indolence and vague, misdirected aim. There was hope and encouragement to Mrs. Belcher's heart; the old fretfulness was gone, health re-established, and the younger children were being taught lessons of truth and virtue.

"We shall not probably have a more beautiful snow," said Mr. Shippen, as he returned from the school-house, where he had left Robert and Ethel. "I have business at Holden; if you choose to accompany me, May; or you can stop at Mrs. Belcher's."

Leaving Felix with his blocks, and Katy to care for him, they started. It was a morning of rare loveliness: a light, feathery snow had fallen during the night; heaped loosely on the fence rails, roofing dwellings, jutting out into delicately carved cornices, capping windows and dovecots; inlaying corners, and crowning tree-tops. Not a dazzling white, painful to the eye, and still fascinating; but a soft, light, downy appearance: a sense of rest in its calm purity, filling the eye with enchantment, and lifting the heart up in grateful acknowledgment.

Holden was four miles from Wilton; a small factory-town — a branch of a larger establishment, "just commencing to do a good business," Mr. Shippen said; "and bids fair to have a future creditable in a moral and intellectual sense."

There was not much intercourse between the two villages,

and the road was hardly broken; making heavy work for Hunter, despite the skill of the driver. Back from the road, an occasional farm-house, the blue, curling smoke issuing from the snow-capped chimney; with boys and men, in picturesque costumes, cutting paths and driving sleds, the patient oxen throwing up the snow, and the warm breath freezing into icicles as it came in contact with the clear, cold atmosphere.

Midway they struck the river, the crystal surface covered with snow; the bank thick set with trees, the lithe branches of evergreen weighed down with snow, forming a canopy under which small birds twittered and pecked at seeds and red berries. A thin sheet of water frozen, in its fall, hung silent and still; a tawny stain contrasting with the clear white and deep green surrounding it.

"Can anything be more lovely," exclaimed May, whose words had been few, so busily she had been drinking in the beauty, quickening the imagination, and giving weird, phantom forms and combinations to all she saw.

"To everything He hath given a beauty that art cannot equal: the delicate frost-work cannot be rivalled. 'Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?'" said Mr. Shippen.

"Job had a wonderful conception of the majesty of God's works; the breadth and extent of his knowledge has always surprised me. 'He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing;' and to think that it required such a lapse of time before this assertion was understood!"

"A wonderful book," returned Mr. Shippen; "the more it is studied, the more it will be prized; opening the understanding, and giving the eye to drink in rare and unobserved beauty in the things of earth."

"Judge Staples reads it; but it fails to make the impres-

sion upon him that I should think it would. A lover of music and poetry, I should think he would be captivated with the sweetly flowing numbers, the combination of strength with simplicity, the bold, original, and lofty conceptions."

"Judge Staples studies the Bible as he would read philosophy—the rich maxims of truth and beauty give him pleasure; he weaves them into his speech, he sees the beauty; but there is no God in it. He does not ask to be enlightened; he is satisfied with his reason. God does not reveal himself to such a reader; it is a teachable, submissive spirit that He requires."

The factory village was in sight, its brown walls, and strange-looking towers looming up grim and dark—hardly within reach, and still leaving one to fancy the sound of wheels and hands, and countless forms of machinery impelled by steam, and in no wise impeded by snow and ice and all the atmospheric influences that winter could bring.

Turning a sharp angle in the road, they came suddenly upon a horse floundering in the snow; one shaft broken, and the sleigh upset; the driver making what effort he could, but at every move sinking deeper into the drift.

"Dr. Wiseman!" exclaimed Mr. Shippen; "I did not know that you were ever in such straits."

"I made a wrong calculation this time; and I regret it the more, as it is a case of life and death."

"If I can pass you, doctor, I would suggest that May stay here with Mab, and I will drive you into the village, and return. Will that do?"

"That is for May to say. Are you freezing, child?"

"Not a bit cold, Doctor Wiseman. Go at once."

With difficulty, Hunter was made to pass. The doctor's sleigh was righted, and May nestled down in the buffalo robes.

"Mab is thoroughly tired; you will have no occasion to be afraid of her," said the doctor.

It was an hour before Mr. Shippen returned, bringing two of the workmen. Mab was liberated; looking around and shaking herself from the snow, a little neigh escaping her, as though thankful for freedom.

"Did you think it long, my child?" and Mr. Shippen helped May to his own sleigh, leaving the men to bring on the other.

"Oh, no, father; I was thinking of what the doctor said —'a case of life and death!' I am thankful that we came up just as we did."

"We will go home another way; longer, by a mile, but a travelled road."

"I am glad we have seen it, father."

CHAPTER XIII.

DARK DAYS.

"YOU will be careful of Felix," Dr. Wiseman said to May Shippen; "there is a good deal of scarlet fever in town, and of a more malignant type than usual."

A swift thought rushed through May's heart, and her grasp of Felix's hand tightened. She had listened to the rumor; and she knew mothers who had watched and waited for days—only to see the small faces hid away under the coffin-lid. Felix was a strong, healthy child: she had scarcely thought of such a possibility for her.

"I do not say this to alarm you," continued the doctor, seeing the expression of her face; "only be prudent with regard to exposure and diet. In the time of an epidemic, the atmospheric tendencies are in that direction."

Standing at the window, May watched Mab go up the street. The winter was nearly gone; the snow thin, and in patches. She was anticipating the advent of spring as she had never done before. All the months, Philip was studying with a thought of college-life. It was, in all probability, the last spring that they would be together. She had thought of this; but now it came with a sense of pain: not of giving up as she had thought to do with Philip, but as something wrenched from her grasp. Far away she caught the glitter of marble columns. One by one the tears dripped over her face, and fell on Felix's dimpled cheek.

"It is not wise to yield to such fancies," she whispered to herself; and lifting Felix down, the little green-and-gold book fell to the floor. The sound smote her like a sword-thrust; and burying her face in her hands, a sharp cry escaped her—so full of piercing anguish, Katy heard; and hastening from the kitchen, stood half conscious of wrong, and still with a questioning look: "I thought the baby needed me, perhaps?"

"No, Katy;" and the voice was low as only self-control could make it. With a fine instinct, Katy saw the book, and with a glance she read what culture only would have failed to read.

"Alfred is here; have you time to play for him?" and Katy came back the second time.

"Yes, I have time; tell him to come in."

"I knew she would," as Katy hurried out.

Alfred Brown had improved with these few winter months. A fine head—high, symmetrical, and broad—with features regular and finely cut; giving the impression of rare purity and truth of character: a blending of strength and delicacy, to develop with his years.

"I have brought my journal; and please look at this," opening a sheet with a song in score. The words were gone. Alfred's eyes were full of tears.

It was a new phase in the boy's life, and May was quick to recognize the power locked in so weak a frame.

"Who helped you, Alfred?"

"Philip gave me the paper."

"The composition, the words, the music?"

"It is my own."

Seating herself at the instrument, May quickly ran over the air—sweet and touchingly plaintive; the tears were in her eyes: she could not see the words.

"That is it—that is the way I want it to sound;" and

striking in, Alfred sang in a clear mellow voice. Tears were gone: the little hunchback stood transformed; his head thrown back, and his fine eyes full of enthusiasm.

"This is not your first attempt?" asked May, scanning the bars.

"I cannot remember when I did not try; for I can hear it always."

"You can hear the music?"

"You see, he's lived so much alone;" and Katy's face was wet with happy tears. "I always knew; I've heard him talk and sing, and many's the time I would have worked my fingers off to have the things to do it with. My heart will bless the day you took us in, and so will Alfred's;" and Katy slipped through the kitchen-door to hide the tears.

"Will you leave this with me, Alfred? I like it, and would like to show it to my friends. If you can write songs like this, with music of your own, you will be doing good; and at the same time, winning for yourself all that you can desire."

"I am glad you like it, and I will write another to show how thankful I can be."

Alfred had gone, and Katy with him half the way.

"I feel so light; I am afraid it will not last;" and flinging himself down beside the road, he lay his head in Katy's lap. "I have dreamed of it so many times; she likes it—she said she did—and yet 'tis nothing—" while Katy soothed and petted him by turns.

"She'll help you, May will; I hardly know, but I am sure she will."

"If anybody can."

"The little book says there is Another."

"I read it every day."

"The sun will soon be down," said Katy, lifting the

books; "you see 'tis different now; the things to do it with will make it easy. How many times you've cried because you had no paper to score it on!" and leaning against the fence, Katy glanced along the road that led to her mother's house.

"It will be all right," kissing the boy's cheek; and watching him till he was out of sight.

"He's a good lad, is Alfred; and sure whatever we ask the good God for, that we shall have. There's not much Katy wants; but she can ask;" and with a heart pouring its wealth of love on this frail boy, Katy made haste.

Night closed around the gabled house; the fire burned brightly, and the astral lamp threw a ruddy light over the tea-table.

"Father and Philip are late," Robert said, as he opened the street door and looked out. Ethel was deep in her book, not caring to look up, and only roused as Philip said:

"We waited for the mail," giving the package into May's hand.

"One from Belle, as usual," said Robert, looking over her shoulder; "and this, yes, I have it—'tis from Adam True."

"What says the boy?" asked Mr. Shippen, sending up his cup.

"At school, and studying hard; he misses Miss Hazard among the rest: she kept his faults spread out; he could not help but see them. Now, he is afraid they'll grow like weeds."

"Miss Hazard has an orbit of her own."

"I have sometimes felt Miss Hazard's thought was better than her speech," May replied.

"No wonder Adam misses her: she was a perfect rasp."

"Keeping him from rust; his whole life may be brighter for her influence;" and May read the letter to the end.

"It would not be strange for him to be a missionary," Philip said. "I judge the family in which he lives would foster this desire."

"I am glad that he is friendly still with Mr. Meade. Adam does not weakly lean upon his friends; and still he prizes counsel," May said.

"Baby go to sleep;" and slipping from his high-backed chair, the curly head was laid on May's knee.

"Has he been exercising more than usual to-day?" asked Mr. Shippen; "he seems very tired."

"Are you, pet?" and May took him in her arms, unloosed the small shoes, and slipped the red dress over his head.

"Baby can sleep;" as she drew the white night-gown over his shoulders.

"Sing, pease," as he finished his simple prayer; and listening to May's cradle hymn, he was soon asleep.

Morning came; and May was startled as she looked upon the flushed cheeks, and listened to the quick breathing of the child. Dr. Wiseman was called. A strange seriousness fell over the household. Philip took his books, and Robert and Ethel went out silently. All day May sat with the child in her arms, and night confirmed what the doctor feared to say: "It is scarlet fever, and by no means of a favorable type."

"What if he should die?" and May was conscious of a strange, new feeling in her heart. Once more she lived it all over; the mother's dying charge: she had tried to keep it; she could not give him up. All day she watched; with effort keeping back the tears; cold, icy fingers clutching at her heart, and the blue veins on her forehead filled to bursting; doing all that could be done, and still not able to assuage a pang.

Another day, and books were laid aside. Katy's movements were more subdued. The table was duly spread; but a strange visitant was there: the angel of Death stood on the threshold; the shadow of his wing rested on the house; his breath was cold and chill. Like shadows still, almost as breathless they hovered around his pillow; feeling their hold upon the little life growing less; hearing the rustle of celestial plumage, the tread of angel feet.

"How is the child?" It was a mother's voice; and May felt a mother's heart beating against her own.

"Let me take him, May."

It was Mrs. Prime, and there was something in the voice that touched with a sense of calm; a warmth, a loving tenderness, as of one that knew from having passed through the same ordeal.

"God loves a cheerful giver," was sweetly whispered. "It is only a fresh proof of His love. He sends to know if you have yielded all?"

"This child was the last charge of my mother."

"Yours to love and teach so long as God should please. Give him to Jesus, May."

Silence rested over the room. By the side of the anguished father, Dr. Prime kneeled, and a voiceless prayer went up—not for life; but for submission.

In that hour, May saw that it was not a passive submission; quiet, because powerless; but a cheerful readiness to suffer all His will—a tender, loving giving into His hands; a restful feeling, content with whatever He sends. She had known this in theory; her judgment acquiesced in His right to rule. But never had she realized the exceeding tenderness of His great love, the preciousness. Sitting with the sick child upon her knees; the child for whom she had cared with the watchfulness of a mother; the child for whom she was willing to give up the hopes she had cher-

ished, teaching him patiently, bearing with him lovingly; hoping and trusting that his life would be crowned with manliness and honor.

"Give him to Jesus, May." Passive obedience was gone. She had a gift—a little life, dear to her. "Take me and mine," was once more whispered; but from a purer heart—a heart tried in the furnace seven times heated.

Peace was in her heart, a calm, restful enfolding in His arms; she felt the clasp of His tenderness; she knew that it was well.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW FAMILY.

HYACINTHS were in their beauty, and tulips were opening their bright cups to the sun. The parlor windows were open. Felix sat in his high-backed chair, talking to May on the walk. The old healthful look was coming back to his face, the light to his eye; and to May he seemed suddenly older, so much had been woven into the experience of those few days: an inward change working outward; she felt it each day, welcoming spring and the gifts she brought with a fervor that spoke deep, grateful feeling.

"How is it that your flowers look so much brighter than ours?" asked Belle Staples, meeting May's good-morning with a kiss.

"Father prides himself on his hyacinths; they are perfect this season."

"So is everything else here;" and the two girls twined their arms about each other's waist, and walked up and down the avenue. Belle had so much to tell of the winter, and the acquaintance she had made.

"You know, of course, that Mrs. Holt's place is sold?"

"I heard so."

"The family moved in last week: a widow, with one son—at present in Germany—and a daughter of my age. Won't it be nice? I have been half dying to go up there; wouldn't you like to go?"

"It is a courtesy due them."

"When shall we go?"

"This afternoon, if you will."

"Morning calls are more fashionable;" and Belle played with the charms on her watch-chain.

"I do not imagine people coming to the country will stand upon ceremony, as in town," replied May.

"Mrs. Holt was very stately; and I took it for granted anybody taking her house would be something like her. Do you hear from them, ever?"

"I have not heard since they sailed for England."

"Father says there is no mistake about the fortune that has fallen to them. Some great uncle died, and Rufus will have to take his name and title, 'My Lord,' or, 'Sir Rufus.' Would n't it be absurd to be obliged to address somebody that you had always known in this way? And then to have to do just so, and so, or to lose all."

"If we had been born under their laws, I suppose we should like them just as well as they do."

"I am thankful that I belong this side of the water; nothing would tempt me to be surrounded with so much ceremony. Mrs. Holt will be in her element."

"Mrs. Holt was a kind-hearted, benevolent woman; the poor people missed her last winter."

"Rufus is inclined to be a little wild, father says. You know he was so steady here; the effect of city-life, perhaps."

"Without being a strictly religious man, I always thought Rufus possessed of a deep, abiding principle; a high sense of honor, that would keep him, with whatever surroundings, from a life of dissipation."

"I hardly know as it would be called that—not in town, certainly; but then he lived fast, and seemed reckless to what he used to be here."

"Philip has finished a new arbor. Let us examine it;" and May led the way to the foot of the garden.

"A novel idea, and as much like Philip as possible," exclaimed Belle, as she entered a small octagonal room, floored with pebbles; the outside covered with the bark of trees, and the inside wound with a loose, hempen rope.

"The day is exhilarating; I am half inclined to call on Mrs. Stewart," Belle said, as they wound back to the veranda.

"I thought of them as strangers, thinking more of the call than of the time," returned May.

"Very well; afternoon let it be;" and Belle was gone.

With a mechanical step, May entered the house. Belle had not intended to trouble her; the two were friends in the true sense of the word; and if there was something in May that Belle did not understand, she loved her not the less, and respected her still more. It was an hour before dinner, and in that time she had gone over the new lesson: not passive, neither to be given grudgingly; but a cheerful spontaniety of the heart—a child resting in the care of a tender, loving father.

The walk to Mrs. Stewart's led through the village; and pleasant greetings met them on every hand. Belle had been away during the winter, and May confined at home, especially since Felix's illness.

"It looks like old times;" as Dayton opened the gate.

"We were conjecturing if we should find you here," said May, in a pleasant tone.

"I could not be content to live anywhere else; I tried it; but the old place is dear to me. I've had the care of it nigh upon twelve years; I can't for the life tell what got into that boy; just the handsomest place for miles—and when he had it fitted to his mind, leave it. And now, I hear he's off to England, with his mother."

"Mrs. Holt was from England; it was natural that she should wish to return."

"But not to stay: that is what troubles me; I want them to come back."

Mrs. Stewart was rather more than middle aged; tall, with a finely moulded figure, a little inclined to embonpoint; hair slightly gray, and curling; eyes bright, and the whole face indicative of health and good-humor.

"We like the country," said Mrs. Stewart in reply to her visitors; "and if we did not, a day like this would win us;" and there was that in her voice that told May she recognized the external loveliness of the earth as only the exhibition of His love.

From the opposite side of the garden, a young girl was seen to approach. A beautiful face: the light-brown hair waving about the broad forehead; the neck white and slender: the blue eyes brimmed with a touching seriousness—winning as the breath of spring.

"Elizabeth, these are the young friends of whom Mrs. Holt spoke;" the mother's face lighting up as her eyes rested on her child.

"I trust Mrs. Holt's friends will be ours likewise;" and the graceful girl extended her hand.

"You will not usually find us gardening at this hour, but the day was so fine; and Dayton has not been here during the winter."

"Accustomed to the place in Mrs. Holt's time, I am afraid that you will find too much of a contrast. We do not intend to make improvements, only to carry out her plans," Mrs. Stewart said.

"Does Mrs. Holt expect to return?" asked Belle.

"I should presume not."

The call was not a long one; and after walking through the house and partaking of slight refreshment, the visitors left.

Down the hill, Belle was in raptures. "I had no idea

of finding them so pleasant;" running on, and commenting upon each, without stopping for an answer.

"I only hope she is not so terribly good that she can't dance, and go to balls; and I hope she can play cards;" and Belle laughed good-humoredly.

"What if I should hope?"

"You would not let her do it."

"We have always been friends; and I have no time to dance—do not even know how to play cards;" and May's voice was full of tenderness.

"I love you all the better that you do not."

"Then why do you wish to have Elizabeth Stewart dance and play cards?"

"I always feel that I am doing wrong if you are by, and if she is on your side—"

"I wish you did not think so much of these things, Belle."

"But I do."

"Do you believe that it is right to spend time in this manner?"

"No."

"Would you not be happier, if you acted according to your conscience in this matter?"

"I do not doubt it."

"Then why not do it?"

"What would people say? I should be derided—called a Methodist."

"I should willingly be called a Methodist, if they only intended to signify that I had begun to live in a manner justifiable to my own conscience, and in accordance with God's word."

"If I could only know that it is God's word, May. You are acquainted with my father's creed. He reads the Bible; he says it is a wonderful book; that the maxims are models

of wisdom and beauty. But he says that they were written by men living in an age not as enlightened as ours."

"Belle, by the friendship you bear me, will you promise to read this Book for yourself? Will you read it with a teachable spirit; willing to see its beauty, to feel its power? Will you ask God to help you to understand it?"

"I cannot promise; but I will try to read it as you desire, May."

The following day was the Sabbath; the strangers were at church. Judge Staples gave them a seat in his own slip; and from the moment Belle caught the expression of Elizabeth Stewart's face, the conviction was fastened upon her that May Shippen was no longer alone; there was another as young and as beautiful, another who gloried in the love of Christ.

CHAPTER XV.

GOING FROM HOME.

YOUTH is the season of bright hopes and joyful anticipations. All his life, Philip Shippen had studied; and the last year with an aim, and a purpose distinctly before him. The vestibule of manhood was gained; a new path was opening—a path leading out from the home hallowed with tender memories. Pausing on the threshold of his new life, a strange sadness crept over him; he knew that he would miss them—he knew that he would be missed. The great work was before him. To do good according to his ability, there must be preparation. Years of study must be passed; intellect must be strengthened and enlarged by effort; conflicts with self must give him the mastery before he could effectually lead others. All of this Philip saw, and it rendered him active, earnest, tender—doing it as it might be for the last time; making a careful selection of words, knowing that the hearts of the small household were sore in thinking of his absence.

"I hardly know what we shall do without you," May said, as, sitting in the twilight, they talked of the coming time.

"If I did not feel the necessity, I could not go," returned Philip. "Dr. Wiseman says that I am ready, so far as books are concerned; and with nothing in the way, it would be folly to defer."

"You must go, Philip; study and discipline you must have to labor effectually in the field you have chosen. I have

been thinking of mother to-day. It makes me feel old to see friends slipping away, and to know that change must come before we see their faces again. Still, we know the sunset is oftentimes more glorious than the morning; the autumn fields richer than the fresh green spring."

"The autumn fields will prove but stubble unless the furrow is turned in the spring-time, and the seed cast in. It is the cultivated field that yields a harvest."

There were not as many strangers in Wilton as usual for the summer; and many families, not in the habit of leaving home, had gone to visit friends and relatives. Among the rest, Miss Hazard.

"It seems strange not to see her in church," said Philip. "After all, flaw-hunters are a necessity; little defects undermine character, as worm-holes sink the ship; and in order to avoid these, they must be pointed out. No knowing but I shall miss her as much as Adam True did."

"I am glad to see a leaning in her favor," said May, with a laugh. "I never felt to blame her; had the circumstances of her life been different, flowers might have been seen in the room of thistles."

"That is right, my daughter;" and Mr. Shippen entered, leading Felix by the hand. "Dr. Prime was peculiarly happy in his choice of a subject this morning."

"The epitome of Christianity," continued May.

"I liked his exposition of virtue: taking faith for granted, 'add virtue;' which he interpreted as manliness," said Philip.

"Manhood without Christianity is like a prince without a crown, a monarch without a kingdom," remarked Mr. Shippen.

"'And to virtue, knowledge;' this is the incentive to study; the more we know, the more we shall know: the more we know, the more we shall enjoy, even in this

world. How it beautifies what God has made! How it exalts the Author and Creator!"

"'And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity;'" and May repeated the remainder of the text.

"Peter was not satisfied with faith. This was the foundation; on this he built; giving us a beautiful pattern, and crowning all with charity;" and Mr. Shippen removed the small gloves, and hung up Felix's cap.

Wilton was happy in a ministry like Dr. Prime's. A fine intellect, and of deep and broad culture. It was not his aim to shine. With simplicity, and singleness of heart, he sought to awaken his hearers to their higher interests; to manifest in every sermon the love of Jesus for fallen man. Like dew, the truth had fallen into hearts long dead to other influences. He visited among his people, and became personally interested in everything that pertained to their welfare. It was the burden of his heart, laboring in season and out of season; not looking for a harvest of his own—content that the angels should reap what he had planted. With a fine tact, he was able to strike the right vein; and of his congregation, none were less willingly absent than Judge Staples.

"I was glad to see Mrs. Stewart and her daughter in Judge Staples's pew," said Philip, changing the conversation. "I am strangely mistaken, or you will find a friend in Elizabeth. She has a sweet voice."

"I felt sure of it yesterday, and to-day she spoke so sweetly; anxious to do what she can;" returned May.

As the summer deepened, May's fingers grew strangely busy: weaving in her fancies with her stitches, and thinking of the time when there would be one less.

"Off for college! I thought as much;" and Deacon

Stiles reined Gypsy in at the gate. "We shall miss you, boy; and what is May to do without you?" and the deacon threw down his reins, and began pulling at his pocket-book.

"A letter from Adam; thought maybe you would like to read it. Something in that boy. I didn't do quite right by him, and it bothers me;" and there was a nervous twinge about the deacon's mouth. "See what he says: he writes a fair hand;" handing the letter to May.

"When do you leave?" turning to Philip.

"Next week."

"Next week will come pretty soon. It don't seem like much—one can talk of it easily; but when it comes to the time, it is quite another thing. I remember when I left home—had n't anything but a change of linen; and this, for convenience, I had tied in an old silk handkerchief. It seemed strange, as I stood in the small, unfinished room, knotting the handkerchief; and when it was done, I took it up and looked round to see if there was anything else. My eyes were full of tears, and seizing the bundle, I ran down stairs. Mother met me, and the girls. Mother asked me if I was sure I had everything? and if I had my Bible? I just then remembered where I left it: said I, 'No.' I shall never forget just how mother looked. 'I hope, David, you won't forget your Bible. Read it every day. Make it the rule of your life, my son;' and she dropped right down, crying as though her heart would break. I never saw her afterward; but from that day to this, I've read my Bible every day—it 's pretty much all I have read;" and the deacon wiped his eyes with the corner of his red silk handkerchief.

"We shall see you before you go?" and the deacon gave Gypsy the word.

"Adam is full of missionary work," Philip said, as, with the letter in his hand, he walked with May. "Next year,

he will enter college; he has not yet determined where. Adam True would not have been what he is, but for your influence, May. That ride to the wood-yard was the turning-point in his life;" and dropping into a garden seat, these two, so closely knit together, talked and planned.

"I shall try to keep up with you. Dr. Prime says that I may recite as often as I wish;" and May's voice was broken. "You will not forget to tell me of your lessons, Philip?"

"A review of each lesson will do me good, and benefit you. It will take my spare time, and keep me out of mischief."

Thus the shadows found them; and the dew spangled the grass. Lights were glancing in the house, and Ethel's voice sounded along the walk.

"I have looked everywhere for you," as she seized Philip's hand. "Father says Dr. Prime is obliged to leave three days earlier than he expected to. Oh! Philip, how much we shall miss you!" and hardly knowing it, Ethel was in tears.

It was the last evening of Philip's stay; the good-byes had all been said; the trunk was packed, and stood in the hall. All day the house had been full. Deacon Stiles had been there, and his wife; Mrs. Stiles's quiet face rosy as a girl's, as she laid a small package in May's hand.

"It is for Philip. I wanted to do something for him, and I thought maybe he'd like this as well as anything."

"I thank you in Philip's name; there is nothing that would better please him;" and May saw two pair of white wool hose, soft and even.

"I knit them myself; and I knit two pair beside for Adam True."

"You will be ready to start early," said Dr. Prime. "I am glad that it will take us two days, and that it will

offer us a good deal of sight-seeing on the way;" at the same time laying his hand on May's head.

"We must study so as to keep on the same plane with Philip."

The visitors had gone, and Mr. Shippen had said all that he had to say, winding up his advice with:

"But your great duty will be study. You love books, and there your future lies buried. Science is nothing but important truths with reference to a subject, arranged in order; in other words, science is truth on paper: life is truth in action. But you must know a truth before you can act it. Men govern the world; but ideas govern men: and to learn and practise those leading ideas on which life is practically based—this is Education."

The stillness of night was in and around the gabled house; for hours May had been at the casement: she could not sleep. Another link in the home-chain was broken; and when Philip returned, it would only be to mark changes on the face and in the heart of each. Above, the stars were shining, just as they had been shining years before; the wind was still, and the gleam of marble in the village church-yard just the same. How long ago it seemed! and May's thoughts went backward; each little word was branded on her heart. "See that your brothers make men, May." So far, Philip had done well; he was a youth of noble principle, but temptation was before him. Would he stem the current of college-life, and maintain his integrity? Would he yield, as others had done; his opportunities misimproved, his future tarnished?

Vexing her brain with questions running into the future, May sat by the window; the moonbeams asleep on the casement, and the stars with answers of peace that she could not understand. Whatever it was, Philip was slipping from her; from this point the path would diverge:

one scaling the mountain, the other threading the valley; and both leading to the same home at last.

Bowing her head, an earnest prayer went up: "Father, give him strength to resist every species of evil; and clothe his manhood with usefulness and honor, for thy name's sake."

The breaking of home-ties no longer troubled her. There was One who would be to her more than mother, or brother. Change would not affect him; time would not win his footsteps into another path. Neither would death snatch him from her grasp. Her trust was in God: she knew that He would bring it to pass.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LITTLE MUSICIAN.

THE days following the one on which Philip left, were cold and chill; with flashes of sunlight swept away by the winds, and obscured by fitful clouds. In spite of all the effort to be cheerful, a strange gloom spread over the gabled house. Robert's voice had less of joy in it, and Ethel walked demurely.

"I feel as though I had passed a dozen birthdays," Robert said, as he brought home Bess and Brindle; dropping the brown bars one by one.

"With Philip here, I did not so much mind it. It makes me feel older, May."

"The feeling of responsibility elevates us, so that we see life from a new plane; the exuberance of gayety is toned down. We realize that something is expected of us, and we are careful to do our best."

"I feel that it is for me to do what Philip did, in addition to what was my part before."

"There is such a thing as feeling responsibility too deeply. It should be our aim, in whatever circumstances we are placed, to do our work faithfully: in this consists the honor. God gives us the position; all that He asks of us is to do our best. And this we are to do for Christ's sake."

"Do you mean, sister, that it is just as honorable for us to do one thing as another?"

"Provided that it is in the path of duty. It is just as honorable for you to drop the bars into their place, thereby

keeping Bess and Brindle within prescribed limits during the night, as it would be if you carried the key of the chief treasury: faithfulness is what is required. Straws show which way the wind blows; and little, unstudied acts show character. If we are in the habit of doing little things faithfully, we shall then be fitted to do great things worthily."

"It was something of this feeling that led me to destroy that last clay model. I knew that I could do better."

"And you see that you can: working to-day on yesterday's experience. I examined it this morning, and saw great improvement."

"I have thought of this; and I shall think more of it now. Philip won't be here to help me."

"Life is an onward movement. If you have a mountain to climb, and make but a step in advance, you are sure to gain the top; just so in life: a step gained each day, will at last give us the mastery."

With another look to see that his work was faithfully performed for the night, Robert walked up to the house. He felt older, as he said; he could not throw the responsibility upon Philip. Neither could he leave it for another. It rendered him thoughtful, and raised him to a nearer level with May. Henceforth she would depend more upon him, and Ethel and Felix would look to him, as they had before done to Philip.

Night flung down her curtain, and looped it with a star. May sat in the open door, one arm about Felix's waist; his head was on her shoulder, her fingers tangled in the golden meshes of his hair. Robert's words made her think of the time when she suddenly awoke to a sense of responsibility; lifting her up to womanhood, and giving her to feel the weight of years: the accumulation of birthdays taken at a leap. Philip had slipped away from her. Robert was

growing tall, and manly; and Ethel was springing up into a lovely girl. Felix was a healthy child, full of fun and frolic. There was no denying she was growing older, her experience deepening; the rainbow hopes of her youth not so brightly colored.

Dr. Prime had returned; commencement was over, and Philip fairly entered upon his new duties. One little letter had been received. Philip had exerted himself to write cheerfully, but May could not be deceived; she saw the gnawing home-sickness, despite the new duties, the new acquaintance.

As the days of summer merged into autumn, walks were planned and schemes of benevolence carried out. Mrs. Stewart had made the acquaintance of nearly every one in the vicinity, and Elizabeth was eager and willing to use her time, talents, and advantages for Christ.

"I have a visit to make to-morrow, and if you are inclined, I would like you to accompany me," said May, as she sat on the veranda of Elizabeth Stewart's home.

"A fashionable call?" and a rare smile broke over the fine face.

"A little, deformed friend, to whom I have long wished to introduce you."

"I will gladly join you," returned Elizabeth.

The morning was clear, the white clouds floating in a sea of blue. Katy and Felix stood in the door, till the two girls wound through the bronzed gate, and along the path to the spring and the apple-tree. The breath of flowers was in the air; the fields full of golden sheaves. Sitting on the brown moss; the apple-tree weighed down with tempting fruit; the water from the spring rippling away in silvery music; the little confidences of girlhood woven with parti-colored threads: the hopes and aspirations, the day-dreams merging into calm and restful feeling. Nowhere is piety

so beautiful as in youth: crowning the natural grace; brightening the intellectual faculties; refining the taste; enveloping the entire being in a loveliness little less than divine. It adds a charm to friendship; and is to love, the keynote.

"A little self-denial even here," said May. "Katy is thinking of us as being with Alfred this hour. I always make it in my way to pass the old apple-tree, however;" and filling her basket with apples for Mrs. Brown, they once more started.

"It is a good morning that brought you, Miss," said Mrs. Brown, as she dusted a chair for May, and another for Elizabeth. "Alfred was hoping you would come."

Floating through the room came a thin wave of delicious music—now soft, low, plaintive—stealing into the soul, and taking possession of each secret chamber; then loud, bold, triumphant—lifting the heart into regions of ravishing delight.

"This is one of Alfred's happy days," said Mrs. Brown; "he was up early—hardly stopping to take his breakfast; and now he has it done, he is playing it over. It does n't sound quite as it should; he has nothing, poor boy, but the old viol his father left him."

Tears were running down May's cheeks: she was thinking of the first time she had seen him; the tears on his face. "Music always makes me sad," she said. Living in a world of beautiful sounds and celestial melodies, no wonder it brought the tears: the sharp contrast between the inner and the outer life.

"I never disturb him myself—I like to hear him play; but he will feel badly if I do not tell him you are here."

"Do not disturb him, I beg," returned May. "When he has finished, he will come down."

Gradually the strains of melody died away, leaving a

still, white calm. The door of the small, upper chamber opened, and Alfred entered. His face was deathly pale, and his eyes were filled with tender light, as though the enthusiasm of his soul had burned to the level of a soft, rosy flush.

"I am glad to see you;" as he gave his hand to May. "I never come quite up to what I hear."

"We thought it beautiful," as May introduced Elizabeth Stewart.

"It loses half the charm when I put it in score."

With well-put words, May won him to speak freely of music, and of the indwelling harmonies; leading him to speak of his first efforts, of the dreams he cherished, and the tears because he had not the paper, ink, and pens requisite. The door to the old life was unlocked, and Mrs. Brown brought out the pictures she cherished, telling of her husband. Alfred's father was a musician, a player on instruments, and a composer. While in Dublin, he was chief-organist in the cathedral. Through illness, and over-study, he lost his sight; and this affliction deprived him of his position as organist. His compositions were not as frequent, and not as good. He lost his popularity; sickened, and died.

This was the sum of Mrs. Brown's words; told brokenly, and with tears. "We were too poor to grieve," she continued; "and when we came to this country—but I will not be after telling you all that we suffered. Katy was a good girl, and she did her best; and now my heart is lightened in seeing her a bit gay, as she used to be. She was her father's pet, was Katy; a gladsome, light-hearted thing. God bless you for being kind to her, Miss—for being kind to all of us;" and the poor Irishwoman crossed her hands and looked from the sweet, calm face of May in the chair, to the Mary on the wall; and the God of all prayer judged of her orisons.

Going to his room, Alfred brought down his journal, and May corrected his composition, and explained his arithmetic; leaving him with a new lesson to think of, and a definite time for recitation to look forward to.

"You have given me a pleasure, for which I shall all my life thank you," said Elizabeth, on their way home. "I have never seen a face that interested me more deeply; the noble head, the exquisitely cut features, and the poor, little, deformed shoulders. It made me feel so very humble to think of all that he has suffered—the pain, the chagrin; and then of the beautiful world of song in which he lives—the harmonies flooding his soul, and to which he listens continually."

"He is eager after knowledge, and studies with an ardor that surprises me."

'I must share with you in this work, May. I can very well afford to do without luxuries; but I cannot do without the luxury of giving."

Autumn trailed her robes, and wore her diadem like a queen. To Mrs. Stewart and Elizabeth it was a new revelation. Accustomed to a milder climate, and a more humid atmosphere, they had never before seen the forests clothed in such magnificence; the countless banners—red, yellow, pink, crimson, and purple—running up and intermingling with brown and silver, blending and harmonizing into one great whole.

"Glorious in his works, let all the earth praise Him!" exclaimed Elizabeth Stewart.

"Never do I so well realize who and what I am, as when standing amid the splendor of His creations. The marvellous beauty of the heavens fills me with awe and reverence; the countless worlds that He has made and peopled; He holds them all in his mighty grasp, and He holds us with a tender, loving care."

"There is nothing to show more effectually the depravity of the natural heart, than the indifference manifested by cultivated minds in reference to His works—the grandeur, the magnificence, the beauty, the harmony everywhere pervading this vast universe; revealing Himself not alone in His creations, but coming to dwell with man, making known the beauty of His character, giving us the glorious example of His life, leaving with us the written word; above all, granting us the ever-present influence of His Spirit. How weak and poor the return we make; how incomplete our best effort! and still we are as dear to Him as little children; He cares for us. I like to think of it," said May; "I like to feel as a little child guided, and walk upheld by His powerful hand."

"I can remember when I did not understand this," returned Elizabeth; "spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The Spirit must first enlighten; the carnal mind must become reconciled to God, the soul immersed in His love, resting in His care. What a precious privilege to walk beside Him through life!"

"It makes it all easy," continued May. "The teacher does not give the same lesson to each pupil; and God deals with us as learners. We need discipline, and He gives it. We need to be taught, and His lessons are in keeping with our ability—suited to the capacity of our mental and physical development. There are no mistakes —no overtaxing."

"The love of Jesus makes all the world kin," replied Elizabeth. "It does away with prejudice: there is no distinction; rank and fortune, place and position, are so many advantages to be responsible for, faithful according to our ability, active and energetic. The part of the field in which we are placed is of His own choosing."

The gabled house was in sight. Katy and Felix came to meet them.

"Has Felix been a good boy?" and May stooped to kiss the white brow.

"We found Alfred in one of his happiest moods," continued May, reading the question in Katy's face. "He has finished another song. We listened as he played it over. It is very sweet. We shall all be proud of Alfred, some day."

"I am always proud of him," replied Katy.

CHAPTER XVII.

WAITING AND WORKING.

FROM the time that May Shippen and Elizabeth Stewart called on Alfred Brown, deep and earnest conviction rested on their hearts that something more was to be done. There was a vital force, a living flame locked in that little, deformed body, that only needed a spark of culture to ignite.

With exquisite tact, a new home was provided; neatly furnished, and in a more favorable locality. Born under the servitude of papacy, it was their aim to place him and his mother in a religious atmosphere—an atmosphere of truth and beauty; the Divine rays piercing his heart, and flooding his soul with new melodies.

"All that is needful," said May to her father, "is to give his mind the possession of its own powers. Education and religious culture will do this."

The new home was in the near vicinity of the village school-house, and within easy walk of Dr. Prime's church. Alfred was deeply grateful for the change, and the Sabbaths were like new days; the musical rhythm running outward: the little, deformed boy was walking in a new path.

"There is not much to keep me at home, and the people around the village are accustomed to your ways," Elizabeth said to May Shippen. And thus it was that the small factory-village suddenly found itself with a teacher; a slight, beautiful girl gathering the children into a Sabbath-school; going into the factory when the din of machinery was

hushed, and the water ran quietly under the great wheels; drawing very near the operatives, letting her sympathetic eyes rest lovingly on the pallid faces, smeared with the dust of toil; taking the rough hands in her own, and telling them the story of His love.

Elizabeth Stewart loved to do this. It was the very work she had asked for. To the time of her coming to Wilton, her associations had been with the rich and the powerful. She had never come down to the heart of the people; never had come in contact with ignorance and need. To see May Shippen in her home; to follow her in and out of the dwellings of the poor; to listen as she talked with the sick and suffering, repeating the promises, and raising them up on the wings of her faith—was an incentive for her to do the same: filling her days with usefulness, and reaping happiness more exquisite than she had ever tasted.

Not alone a Sabbath-school—but a reading-club was started: a large, comfortable room, with books, magazines, and papers. At first there was opposition—a great number ready to cry it down: not willing to give up the saloon and the beer-shop, and seeing full well, that it would lead to the final overthrow of habits to which they had been more or less accustomed. Quiet and firm in her endeavors, the days wore on. Cheerful and modest, she moved among them with a thoughtful, loving care: opposition melted before the love of little children. Order took the place of misrule; and mothers blessed her for her quiet, gentle ways.

The new church in Wilton was progressing. It was to be a marvel of architectural beauty.

"We must have a church in Holden," said Elizabeth Stewart; and her woman's heart was inventive—suggesting and planning. Social intercourse was enlivened. Dr.

Prime's heart was in the work; the sympathies of Christians were awakened; the sewing societies contributed; fairs were held, and money collected. The people of Holden did not wish to be behind. The proprietor of the factory, although not a religious man, did nothing to oppose. More than this, he gave a liberal sum; and promised more, if needed.

"We want a large house," said Elizabeth Stewart; "we want it attractive; it is for your interest; it is for the interest of your soul; it is for your temporal interest."

Mr. Farley was not accustomed to being spoken to in this manner: still he listened patiently, and in the quiet of his counting-room counted the cost. It would be for his interest: lifted to a higher plane, his operatives would do more. They would be orderly, from the love of order; they would at all times be ready to do their best, out of love of right; feeling their individual responsibility would render them more faithful, more devoted to his service. It was a settled thing, the church in Holden would be a profitable investment. A more intelligent class would come in; and thus reasoning, Mr. Farley put down another thousand; and the corner-stone was laid before the snow came down.

Busy with the cares of her household, May Shippen planned. Philip had gone out; but Robert had taken a long step toward manhood. His studies required more careful thought; and his artist-life was developing. Every day he worked at his model, and every night found him with a book to read, telling him of what others had done—kindling his enthusiasm, and making him only the more eager for the time when he could give himself entirely to the work.

With less for her hands to do, May found more time for books and music. She had ever felt herself, in a certain

sense, a teacher; rising early and studying late, that she might become intelligent for their sakes. Ethel was a tall girl — every day was diminishing the difference between them. To keep pace with her charge, she must study; and, if she would lead them in conversation, she must store her mind with rich and varied thought.

As his children grew older, Mr. Shippen exerted himself to greater cheerfulness: entering into their studies, and interesting himself in their games; making himself a companion, with the advantage merely of years and experience.

Thanksgiving had passed; presents had been made, and dinners eaten with the relish of grateful hearts. The holidays were anticipated. Christmas was to be more than a day of remembrance: it was to be a week of reunion. Philip was coming home. Mr. Meade was expected; and Adam True was to spend his vacation with Deacon Stiles.

Never had there been such an occasion, and Katy begged that she might "do it all."

"That will be unnecessary," replied Mary. "We each have our own duties; a careful division of time is all that will be needful."

"How like old times!" as Philip found May studying long before the dawn. "You can never know how I have longed for a sight of this dear old room; the ruddy fire, the easy, cheerful arrangement of chairs and tables; and as we slipped the curtains, and looked at the morning, watching the bright tints on the mountain creeping slowly down into the valley, — the shadows of night flying before the glorious effulgence of the newly risen sun."

"You have missed us, and we have missed you," replied May. "The room is just the same, and the sun comes over the hill in the same fashion. With each of us there is a change: it is not as far to the mountain-top."

"With more flowers in the way," answered Philip.

"God never intended that our path should be sterile; lilies grow in the way of duty, and the footsteps of love are tracked by the roses."

"The lesson for us to learn is trust in God—trust that springs from love; the easy confidence of a simple-hearted child."

"To have this feeling of trust, we must have a tangible idea of God in the person of His Son; we must realize His presence, and feel that He is a friend, able and willing to fulfil all His promises. The more we love, the nearer we shall be drawn to Him."

"The calm, restful feeling that springs from confidence in God, does not come upon us suddenly. It is the growth of years: rich and full in some hearts, poor and meagre in others. But look! the sun is rising. Let us watch it, reddening the hills just as it used to do." And Philip opened the shutters and looked out.

Mr. Meade had finished his college course. He was studying theology, and it was a pleasure to listen to him; so young, so rich in culture; laying all upon the altar of His love; asking no higher service than to be a standard-bearer. But nowhere was greater change to be seen than in Adam True. Tall and manly, with a figure in which strength and grace combined; short, crisp curls framing a forehead white, broad, massive; with eyes like two unfathomed wells of thought.

It was now looked upon as a settled thing—Adam True was to be a missionary.

"What part of the field, will depend upon the wants and needs when I am ready to undertake the work," he said to May.

"How it does away with care, with anxiety—this knowing that He will choose for us," returned May.

If Deacon Stiles had ever wronged Adam in word or in deed, he made ample amends for it now. Never was a week pleasanter; the students everywhere welcomed with words of love and encouragement.

"You must go with me to Holden," said Elizabeth Stewart. And Mr. Meade and Adam True, together with Philip and May, visited the school that day; the tender hand-clasps, and the greetings, the words of encouragement falling like dew on the hearts of those bound to the same dull round throughout the week. Then an evening had been spent at Dr. Prime's, and another at Judge Staples's. As usual, the conversation turned upon art. The Judge had some new paintings; and Robert was privileged to make one of the company.

"I feel a rare pleasure in listening to Judge Staples," said May, as she walked home with Dr. Prime; "his words are forcible, and he has the rare ability of bringing before the mind the very object of which he speaks. Let it be a picture, or a poem, it is all the same. But he invariably leaves an impression of sadness. To see a mind that revels in the beautiful, do away, as he does, with the Author of all beauty, the Giver of human intellect, the vast conceptions, the power, the ability to execute."

"I have ever felt, and I do now, that Judge Staples will come to view these things differently. Direct appeals are no longer needful. He reads his Bible, but he reads it from a wrong motive. He is not so intrenched but the Spirit of God can reach him. This we must ask."

"Belle has been questioning for months. If she would only decide for Christ!"

"God has innumerable avenues by which He brings his children. What a precious privilege we hold: free to ask Him for everything we need, or desire," returned Dr. Prime.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CLOUD WITH A SILVER LINING.

THE students had gone; but not before they had spent a Sabbath together: a Sabbath in which the emblems of His broken body and shed blood were placed before them. Meeting at His table; and with those who sat down for the first time was Harvey Belcher. Mr. Meade's heart was full of gratitude, and Philip could hardly keep the tears.

"I remember when I had little hope of him," said Philip.

"There is power with God," answered May. "The vilest need not despair; neither should we cease to ask, because there is to our eyes so little hope."

"Dr. Prime is well pleased with him. There is promise in the boy: from being the most indolent and insubordinate pupil that I had, he is now earnest, active, energetic; and as anxious for knowledge as he was before indisposed to gain it. It made me feel very happy, and very humble, as I looked upon his face to-day."

"The change in Harvey is reflected on every member of his family," said Mr. Shippen. "His mother is full of hope, and his grandmother an example of Christian patience. 'I have no more to ask,' as I met her after service to-day: happy tears running down her withered cheeks, and her voice tremulous."

A blessed day it had been: a re-dedication with the older members; and leaving the church, May caught

sight of Judge Staples: she never had known him wait before.

Gone! and the gabled house looked strangely dull and gloomy. Robert felt it; and the brusque manner he had affected with Philip by, softened into tenderness; he saw how May missed him, and he planned rides and walks to divert her solely.

Perseverance smooths the rugged path: writing in her journal was no longer a task. From bestowing an hour at night, it had become a necessity: taking the place of a friend to whom she could confide her secret thoughts; pouring out the enthusiasm of her nature, and the pent-up feelings she would hide from others; and whose fleshless lips never responded with words of indifference and doubt.

As the spring advanced, letters from Belle Staples grew more frequent; the gushing outbreak of her girlish manner was soft and subdued. A change had come over Belle: her heart was touched with a new flame; her woman's nature was rounding into completeness. Hitherto, her life had been like the gorgeous drapery of a day-dream, a poem, full of dainty devices and magnificent imagery. Now, it was like a rosy cloud floating in calm serenity, unconscious of purple glooms.

"Belle will be with us next week," said Mrs. Staples, as she encountered May, one morning. "She comes a month earlier than we expected. Her aunt writes me that she is not well; has a cough, and has grown exceedingly thin. I am impatient to have her with me. She has always been so healthy. I would not have her a pallid bride."

"Next week" had come. Belle Staples was at home. And in the pale, thin girl, quiet and timid in her ways, it was hard to realize that she was the same dashing, piquant,

laughing child that had gone out from them less than one year before.

"You must not think so much of it," she said to May, as the two chatted in the same old fashion. "When it comes to be pleasant weather, and we can go to the old apple-tree together, I shall begin to mend. I have told Walter about it. He will be on a month before we are married. I want you to know him, and I fully expect you will like him almost as much as I do."

"I do not doubt it," replied May, laughingly. "But this cold distresses me. What does Dr. Wiseman say?"

"He does not say much to me; he talked with papa a long time, the evening I arrived; and they both looked so dull, I cannot bear to see them together since."

The hills were clothed in soft, spring green; the arbutus put on her pink dress, and the willows ran up their banners. Belle Staples was, strangely weak—a walk to the spring tired her; the red flush on her cheeks was in striking contrast to the whiteness of her forehead. Still, she planned, and exerted herself. She was to be married in June, and sail immediately for Europe. Judge and Mrs. Staples would follow in the autumn.

"I should feel lost without papa; he knows so well where to go; and he is familiar with works of art: and when I come back, you must promise to spend a winter with us. Felix is now a large boy, and Katy is devoted to your interest. Indeed, you must say nothing against it;" and leaning back in her chair, the bright eyes would close, and the breath come quickly.

It lacked but a few weeks: dress-makers were in the house, and rich millinery was scattered over Belle's room.

"Belle, do you ever think that it is possible you may never recover?" asked May, as the invalid sat looking out of the window, an unusual seriousness upon the sweet

face. Gently the eyes were turned, and the words came freely:

"I was thinking of that, May. I have thought of it for several weeks. It is very possible that I shall not get well. It is very possible that —"

"My dear girl, what preparation are you making for this journey?"

"What shall I make?" and the head drooped to May's shoulder. Tears were in her eyes. She had longed for this hour; but she had feared to excite, and now the calmness of the invalid reproached her. "What shall I make?" showed there was a willingness to do.

"There is One to whom you can go. You know Him, Belle."

"The same Jesus of whom you used to tell me? I have thought of Him these nights when I could not sleep, and wished He loved me as He does you, May."

"There is no one that loves you half as much, Belle. He died for you; and all that He asks, is that you accept the love He offers. Is it hard to do this?"

"It is not hard to love a Being whom we know; but I know so little of Him, May. I never have tried to know Him. Will He hear me now?"

"'Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out.' All you have to do is to go to Him, Belle."

"Can I go now?"

"'Now is the accepted time: to-day, if ye will hear His voice.'"

"Then He won't think I've turned too quickly?"

"All these years has He been reaching His hand out to you, saying to you so sweetly, 'Come.' Do you feel that He will think it too soon when you turn and lay your head on His bosom, at rest because you are with Him?"

"He may think that I am not sincere. I have never shown Him any love."

"He will forgive; He will blot out; He will no more remember against us."

"I wish I knew if He would take me just as I am. Is there no danger that He will repulse me?"

"'Whosoever will, let him come.' 'His blood cleanseth from all sin,' and His love is not withheld from the vilest, and the most sinful."

"What a precious Saviour He must be!"

"Precious to those that believe on Him, Belle."

"There is a beauty in Jesus that I have not seen before. Neither do I see it now, clearly; but I am resolved to ask Him. He will see how very weak and ignorant I am, and His heart will be touched with pity. It is too much, May, to think that He will love me—if He will only forgive me, I shall be satisfied."

"His love is very tender, Belle. You are tired, ask Him to take you in His arms; and resting there, you will sleep sweetly. To-morrow I will see you again."

"I will do it;" and the blue lids closed.

Kneeling beside the chair, May was unconscious of the time. The door opened. Mrs. Staples entered.

"She is sleeping sweetly," said the mother, the tears coursing down her cheeks. "I have never thought of it till to-day, May. What if she never gets well?"

"I hardly expect she will, Mrs. Staples;" and she drew the mother into the hall, and closed the door behind her.

"Oh! May; don't say this! Just look at our rooms. I have expected to give her up. We are preparing for it. But not in this manner. I cannot! oh, I cannot bear it!"

"Would that I could comfort you. You have been to me almost a mother since my own mother died. Words are weak, and human sympathy is as nothing in such an hour. There is One who can comfort you, will you only go to Him."

"If He has the wish to comfort me, He will not take my only child."

"He loves whom He chastens."

Gay voices were in the parlor: Mrs. Staples hastily dried her eyes, once more looked at Belle still sleeping, and went below.

"I will see you in the morning;" and May turned to her own home.

How trivial it all seemed: the pomp and magnificence, the tinsel of wealth and fashion, making ready for a future that was to bring so much, and before it comes an unbidden guest appears. How strange, that minds so richly endowed, so capable of appreciation, with refined taste, and sensible that earth is not man's abiding place, should be so fettered to the things of life! The silvery brightness of a cloud, a mist-wreath; a web of gossamer. How deluded: laying up for a body so perishable; counting on to-morrow that may never come; and making no preparation for an event that we know is before us. And if it finds us unprepared, what profit all our earthly hopes? Friendship cannot stay the dart; love cannot bind the spirit's flight; fashion a mockery; riches of no avail. With no Saviour to lean upon, without a guide to comfort by the way, the darkness, the despair: who can bear the thought?

Morning ushered in a day of surpassing loveliness. All nature was clothed in a robe of beauty; the forest-trees put forth their leaves, the breeze swaying them like sheets of emerald; the birds sang in a thousand notes from every thicket; the flocks lay on the hillside, and gambolled in the meadows. The heavens gave promise of a glorious day, all was loveliness, but sorrow shadowed human brows; eyes were filled with tears. A spectre grim and gaunt hovered about that handsome dwelling. His fingers were icy cold; with a severe aspect he shook out the bridal robe

and lay the delicate veil beside it. The wreath of orange flowers stiffened in his grasp. Beckoning with his long shadowy finger they followed from room to room; he was always there; they knew he was only waiting for the flowers.

"You are better to-day!" said May, sinking to a low seat by the invalid's chair.

"It is very lovely, May;" and the bright eyes were filled with a new light. "A quiet, calm, restful feeling, that is new to me."

"Your rest is in Him, Belle?"

"I trust so; but I am so weak, so ignorant."

"All He asks is your love."

"I give Him all, May, my poor little worthless self. If I had done it years ago!"

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

"I felt so weak, so utterly unable to do anything of myself. You told me to ask Him, and I did, and when I closed my eyes I believed that He would hear me. I cannot tell you just how I felt; there seemed a tangible presence, I felt myself gathered in His arms, my head sank on His bosom, I slept, I awoke refreshed; I cannot explain it. But I have been thinking as I sat here that I never saw the earth clothed in such beauty. The air is filled with His love. The heavens declare it, and the flowers speak forth His tenderness. It is a real presence: I look upon His face, I hear His voice, I feel the grasp of His hand. O May, what has hindered me, that I did not see this before?"

"The blindness of a heart filled with the glare and magnificence of things of sense, playing with baubles when the pearl of price was within your grasp."

"I passed a very gay winter, May. I was flattered and caressed. All that wealth could bring, or taste devise, was

mine, and my friends thought me happy. But never did I enter my room alone without the tears. My rest was disturbed. At one time, I was walking along a precipice shelving and insecure. Again, I was looking down into a gulf of impenetrable darkness; a sword suspended over my head; a dim and shadowy spectre haunting me. My aunt said that I was weak, and needed tonics; I knew that I needed rest. The season was at its height, my engagements were numerous, there was no withdrawal. I thought of you, quiet and happy in your home, and in your love for Jesus. Don't blame me, May; you never told me, but I knew it all. It was this love that enabled you to put it all aside. I have thought of it often, and I have asked myself if I could have done the same. I begin to see more clearly. You leaned upon Him, and His strength was sufficient for you." This was said at intervals, the hollow cough resounding through the room, and the hot breath short and rapid.

"Now you are to rest, and I am to read," and May brought pillows, and arranged the cushions.

"Your illness disposes your friends to be very tender of you," as the invalid remonstrated for taking so much trouble. "How much more tender Jesus is! It is only the weak and feeble that He carries in His arms."

"He will take me: I have asked Him."

"Yes, darling, He will bear you very gently; only trust Him."

Dr. Wiseman was like a ministering angel, and the good pastor came, bringing what consolation he could.

Belle Staples had been known and loved, petted and admired. Not a few but envied her the beautiful life she lived. She came home with bright anticipations; a lavish display of the beautiful and gorgeous was around her: and now it was rumored that all these things would profit her nothing.

Hearts were touched. Sympathy was not denied to those suffering parents. Idle words: philosophy had no comfort, metaphysics brought no consolation: dark, gloomy, despairing, Judge Staples turned to the silence of his room, to battle with a sorrow that he had never known, to feel the desolation of one who stands and sees his last hope slipping from his grasp, seeking comfort and finding none.

Into this scene of sickness and suffering Walter Forrest came. Standing in the pride of his manhood, it seemed impossible for him to look upon the blight of his cherished hopes. He could not realize it; his manly lips were blanched to whiteness, and his broad brow was beaded with anguish.

"It cannot be—you must live! We will bring counsel from the city; something more must be done;" hardly knowing what he said.

"All has been done, Walter; the disease was seated before I left the city. God wills it."

"How can He?" and the lips trembled.

"In depriving you of my love, He comes to you with the offer of His own. Accept it, Walter. We have been sadly blind to the loveliness of His character. Come with me, Walter; and if He wills that you remain after I am gone, live for Him, work for Him. Youth, health, talent, riches—dedicate all to Him. It is too late for me; I can only love Him."

An image of despair, Judge Staples walked through his stately rooms. He could not look upon the face of his child without the tears; there was a choking sensation in his throat—he could not speak. Sitting by the side of the invalid, her hand clasped in his, his petted theories vanished: he saw as he had never seen before; and he questioned. Intellect could not solve the mystery, and his proud heart rebelled.

"Give up philosophy; take God at His word," whispered the invalid.

"'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Believe this; He will sustain, He will comfort you: He does me, papa."

The mind is medicined by natural loveliness; but the loveliest spring days failed to bring comfort to the stricken parents. They saw themselves written childless; and burdened with speechless woe, they waited the bitter end.

Walter Forrest still remained, a shadow of what he was a month before; but calm as only despair could make him.

June came, with her blue skies and floating, fleecy clouds; the sweet south wind sweeping over countless beds of roses.

"Dress me in my bridal robe," said Belle. "It is the month in which I thought to leave you."

Noiselessly the messenger entered—touched the brow, the eyes, the lips—and was gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHILOSOPHY *versus* FAITH.

AFFLICTION is the fire that tempers the soul; and theories melt away before the fervent heat. The creed of the materialist vanished into mid air; a black and shrivelled scroll was all that was left of the philosophy on which Judge Staples had prided himself: questions on which his intellectual strength had spent itself, seemed like the idle fragments of a dream. And firmly intrenched as he felt himself to be, when the bitter waters surged over him, he found how weak and worthless were the theories his intellect wrought out. In the pride of manhood, and firm in health, they loomed up before him as mighty towers, strong and beautiful—bulwarks of defence—fortresses into which he could go when danger menanced, or death came. In the valley of the shadow of death he found himself alone—the fortifications had all gone. The miracle of change in the heart of his child was a wonder to him. Her life had been one gleam of sunshine; he saw it darkened, saw her go calmly down into the chill waters: he saw that she was not alone. By her side walked One on whom she could rely: her eye was on His face, His arm sustained her. It was no myth—no visual illusion. The pride of intellect, the vague speculations of atheistic minds faded before the simple story of the Cross: the witness of the poor, unlettered fishermen was of more moment than the sophistry of German metaphysics, or the elegant fabrications of French *savans*. He had tried these,

and found them worthless. Belle's last words—above all, her last look—the peace and joy on which death could not place his seal, was proof positive of a future life. It was no longer a doubt; and if true, where, and with whom was it to be spent?

The scales of indifference had fallen from Judge Staples's eyes. A teachable spirit was his. The Bible was like a new book; he had no wish to cavil, he was in earnest to know the truth; the promises unfolded new beauty: he clung to them.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Judge Staples had been a leading man in Wilton: his position challenged respect; and the urbanity of his manner, the fascination of his speech caused him to be a favorite in whatever circle he entered. A lover of nature, his eyes were open to the beautiful in art, and the easy grace of his words rendered his conversation acceptable. There was nothing coarse in his nature; neither did he intrude his particular tenets upon any one; but, like the thorns in a bed of roses, unseen but subtle, working its deadly way into the very heart of the community, poisoning the springs of hope, love, joy, and causing the withering, blighting mildew of a suicidal creed in the place of a simple, earnest faith in the Son of God.

To see this man prostrating himself at the foot of the Cross had its effect upon a class that had for years stood aloof from the preached word. There was no question of his sincerity. To see him rise in the crowded assembly—the man whose polished shafts of eloquence in the court-room so often charmed the people; to see him with the tears running down his cheeks, his voice tremulous, his

words broken—a little child just learning the story of His love—this upholder of a false creed lisping the name of Jesus, with a loving warmth, a tender reverence, a hallowed touch! How he besought them by the loss of his best years to come to Christ; how fearful that his folly had been as seed to spring up in a harvest of doubt and infidelity all over the land! "If I could only undo it!" and burying his face in his hands, the proud man wept and prayed that his influence in that direction might be stayed.

The heart of the community was tender: they had seen the young and lovely go down into the grave under circumstances that awoke their sympathy; the touching record of her life was theirs. Lovely, accomplished and beloved, her path was sheeted with roses. For years she danced in the meadows and played with the flowers: sickness came, she felt the need of something higher to lean upon. In her helplessness, a Divine arm was reached down to her. "Come unto me." For the first time she listened to the accents of His love, for the first time she raised her eyes. One look into the face, and she grasped the outstretched hand. A miracle of change! they had seen it. Following her footsteps, the polished man of the world, the disciple of Spinosa, the friend of Hume and Voltaire, renouncing them all, and considering it no loss, if, by that means, he could win Christ.

Through the influence of this change, multitudes flocked to the Cross; and multitudes still were electrified and made to tremble in view of that future stretching out before them like an unknown sea, on whose bosom they were sure to launch—and at what hour, they little knew.

Christians were active: the prayers of the faithful were being answered; and all felt the goodness and mercy of that God whose right it is to rule, and to whom man's homage is justly due.

Among those interested in the great movement was Alfred Brown, the deformed musician, and his mother. Educated after the strictest manner of papacy, wedded to forms, and awed by the power of the priesthood, Mrs. Brown was slow to renounce the faith of her fathers; her prejudices were strong, and not till her children had fully decided to follow Christ did she question the validity of a faith that imposed so much and gave so little.

"I cannot help it; the Virgin forgive me if I have done wrong," she said to May Shippen. "Indade, Miss, I have come to believe it is the Son has power to forgive us. Mary is blessed among women only as she was his mother; but the power is His, and our homage belongs to Him alone."

Alfred was making good use of the opportunities his new home offered. During the winter his studies had interested him deeply, and his improvement was in keeping. His music was likewise advancing. Pieces were published: success crowned his efforts, and popularity was sure to be his. Piety gave strength to intellect, entered into his life, permeated his studies, and lent a charm to composition. Like Palestrina, Alfred Brown was destined to have an influence widely felt. The sweetness of the melody, the clear, rich notes overlapped with the purity of an elevated faith, one could not sing his songs with an air of indifference: there was an upward movement, a running up the gamut of inspiration, catching glimpses and listening to the strains of unseen harpists; leading one to feel how more than any other gift the genius of music to touch the heart, and to inspire within it sentiments of noble and heroic virtue.

Katy had already signified her wish to unite herself to the people of God; and the next time Dr. Prime administered the supper, the serving-girl sat by the side of her

mistress; and the little, deformed musician walked up the aisle with the once proud sophist.

The love of Christ overleaps the barriers human pride would foster. The love of Christ is freely given to each member of the human family. His children are all brethren, anxious to promote each other's welfare here; looking forward to the home-gathering with a joy that sends a rosy flush over the present life, and irradiating the future with a brightness that comes from the throne of God.

CHAPTER XX.

LOSS AND GAIN.

NOTWITHSTANDING the broken links in the home-chain, the melting away of human friendships, the dissolving ties that bind congenial hearts, there were happy days in the old gabled house. Visions of rare loveliness, burnished with sunshine. In and out of her rooms May Shippen went; her hands given to the homely ways that make the happiness of a household; the love of her heart gushing up and running over in smiles and words of sweetness, songs and fragments of mystical beauty. On all sides there was work for her to do. Robert, with his artist soul, and artist eye, was to be guided, led; his intellect strengthened, and his fancy toned down by daily communion and intimate converse with the Great Designer and Author of the Universe. Already, through the agency of books, had he become acquainted with the leading minds of other ages: the deepest sympathies of his nature had been stirred as he read of their obscure beginnings, the toil, sacrifice, and sorrow through which they passed. His soul burned as he contrasted the outer life with the grand conceptions, the embodied soul looking out from the canvas, or standing animate, but speechless, in the glittering marble.

Busied with his books, and helpful in all little ways, he still found time to model after the fashion of his own brain; and still with a yearning desire to look upon the works of those who have left the impression of their genius,

not alone on the canvas and in the marble, but in the hearts of an admiring world.

Ethel was approaching womanhood; she had the dark eyes, and the animated beauty of her mother: her figure was good; and her wreathed smile, her intellectual sportiveness, her laugh of innocence, and buoyancy of soul, called for a peculiar culture. She was a skilful performer on the instrument; and the cadences and rich modulations under her slight fingers were like secrets of harmony, treasured for her touch alone. Withal, she had a lofty, and fervent spirit: the love of Christ was in her heart, giving joy to her life, as perfume to the rose. Felix was still a child: his mind and form were yet equally in the bud; but he had an eye of the deepest azure, a living star, with a mind that made one forget his years.

Philip was in college; and every year, Mr. Shippen withdrew himself still more from the influences of the outer world. Politics did not win him; and society, only so far as benevolence was concerned, no longer fascinated him. The light of his manhood was darkened, the twilight of his soul showing here and there a star, and in the silver radiance he tried to be cheerful; but it was an effort that told upon him with the years.

The yard was bright with flowers, the fountain played in the sunlight, and the ferns and the foxgloves were as fresh and blooming as ever. The small ship was launched on the miniature lake, but now it was Felix that freighted it; the young artist had other ships, and a broad, unfathomed sea on which to float them. Sitting on the veranda, there were higher lessons to be taught — lessons of love, broad, free, and stripped of all prejudice, humanizing, and harmonizing with the entire family of man. Nature is sanative, refining, elevating, and as they sit there the talk goes round. Mr. Shippen with his experience, his vision

stretching away to the Eternal Hills, the glorious temple of light, seeing them come and go, joyous, happy, radiant; May with her sweet pensive face; and Robert in the first flush of a new day, purple with the bloom of youthful enthusiasm. Art is not so much as touched upon; it is now that the sweet hopes and experiences of the inner life are brought forward, the future mapped out, and the lines drawn, not that self may be honored, wealth accumulated, and honor won; but that each life may have a practical use. Looking up to the stars, the smallest ones nearest the sun, and feeling the sweet privilege of being a child, a little child, to be cared for, loved, guided; interpreting God's love for His children by the fulness of love in their own hearts.

"In this trust, in this confidence," said Mr. Shippen, "are the springs of our true relations with God. What a delightful thing it is to be children even when we are old, to be children when our hair is gray and our faces wrinkled, to be children when our hearts are torn with anguish and the mysteries of the world perplex us! It is a blessed thing, this trust in God!"

In the great work going on in Wilton, Holden had shared largely. Impelled by a love that was not to be quenched by opposition, Elizabeth Stewart was earnest in season and out of season, going from the school-room to the factory; drawing Mr. Farley into the work, and interesting his wife and daughters; suggesting and planning whereby meetings could be sustained without infringement upon the ordinary hours of labor. Many of the operatives decided for Christ, and others were questioning.

Among the latter was Hannah Belcher, a bright-eyed, laughter-loving girl, full of wit and brilliancy, and especially proud that in her labor she had the means of being useful to her mother, a help to her little brothers and sis-

ters. Four miles was something of a walk, and Hannah did not go home often. It was of necessity late when she arrived, and of course she must leave long before dawn in order to be at her work in time; so that, with the exception of an occasional Sabbath, she saw but little of the family. The public avowal that Harvey made, led Hannah to question more seriously than she had ever before done, and the more she questioned the more she became involved with unnecessary details, losing sight of the one thing needful — submission, and a willing acceptance of the simple demands of the Gospel.

The sweet breath coming in from the hay-fields filled Hannah with a desire to go home, turning out of the public road, and crossing the fields, gathering flowers for her mother's room, and asking herself if God saw and knew? and why some had to suffer and others not? a vague sense of unrest marring the beauty, and bringing the tears. Sunday she walked to church with Harvey, saw him rise and take his place at the table: would it be so at last? Would she be left? and questioning, the tears stole over her face. She was sure she would be a Christian, if she only knew just what to do to attain it. Like too many others, Hannah Belcher could not come down to the simple thought that God so loved the world as to send His Son to redeem it. Lost, He came to save it. Stained with sin, He came to make it whiter than snow. She did not see this. She felt that something was to be done on her part. Let it be sacrifice or self-denial, she could do it; but a simple trust in Christ was more than she could comprehend.

The sunrays slanted through the tall window and fell on Hannah's loom; the breeze rippled over the geraniums and a monthly rose that grew in Ruth Whipple's window; Hannah was dizzy, and her colored threads danced out of place and troubled her; a tear fell on her hand as she

knotted the broken ends. It was the morning for Elizabeth Stewart to go through the rooms; she did not stop to speak when the great looms were in motion, but a gleam of sunshine touched the pale cheeks as she passed. Her eyes carried sympathy; and a book or a paper, marked with her pencil, was sure to be laid where it would be read as soon as the bell should ring.

"I wonder if God knows just how we feel, and if He regards everybody alike?" and Hannah picked up a paper that rested on her web; the tears fell faster, and, sitting on the stairs, she tried to read.

Fannie Skelton came bounding by, and stopped to ask if she had forgotten, just so many minutes for dinner? Two sisters from New Hampshire had curled down with a dinner-pail between them, laughing and chatting low and subdued, and apparently with nothing in common with the others. A lame boy was near them; his mother had brought his dinner, and sat patient and still while he ate it. "You are not hungry — isn't it good?" as the boy pushed it from him.

"It is good enough, mother; but I am so tired;" and he put out his hand and touched hers. There was comfort in it, it seemed to Hannah, for the mother smiled.

"There are so many poor people in the world," thought Hannah.

"You are just the one I wanted to see;" and Elizabeth Stewart took a seat on the stairs.

"I have been thinking of you all the morning. I want to be a Christian, and I don't quite know how;" and Hannah's face was hid in the brown hands.

"If Mr. Farley should send for you, only to say that henceforth he would take the burden and care of your mother, and little brothers and sisters, that he would provide for them, would you find it difficult to understand him?"

"Oh, no," answered Hannah, raising her head slowly.

"If Mr. Farley should do this, it would be, no doubt, with the intention of fulfilling his promise. In this, he would express his willingness; but adverse circumstances might frustrate all his plans, death snap the thread of life, riches take wings, or change disincline him to perform according to his ability; and just when you thought you had found a friend, some one in whom to trust, the scaffolding gives way, your hopes gone; and your heart cries out in bitterness proportionate to the brightness that had before illumined it.

"Jesus comes to you: the all-compassionate Saviour reaching out His divine arms, and saying, 'Come unto me.' 'I, even I, am he that comforteth you.' How sweetly He speaks! giving us leave to cast all of our care upon Him. There is no other support on which we can safely lean. You remember the picture held up to us of His suffering? 'Yet it pleased God to bruise him: he hath put him to grief,' that we, through Him, might be saved. Is it hard to understand Him? Is it difficult to love Him?" and sitting on the stairs, Elizabeth talked of His great love.

A sharp, brisk ringing of the factory bell. Elizabeth Stewart kissed the wet cheek and went out. Through the weary hours, Hannah stood at her loom.

"I, even I, am he that comforteth you." Her web did not trouble her, the colors did not blend and the threads snap.

The wind began to freshen; the perfume of the geraniums invigorated her; the sun dipped above the dam; shadows glimmered on the walls, and crept down between the frames.

Hannah was thinking of home, of her mother and Harvey; she no longer felt like being left behind. If be-

ing a Christian simply meant loving Christ, she could easily do this.

There was a winding up of bobbins; the girls began to whisper.

"I, even I, am he that comforteth you," went singing through Hannah's brain.

"Hannah, what makes you look so grave? Have you turned Methodist?"

She stopped—something had happened: there was a jarring, buzzing, crashing sound!

The floor was sinking under her—there was a gulf between her and the others. There was no time for deliberation: insensibly, she grasped a post: it was firm. If she could draw herself up, there was a door leading out. She did not comprehend that the huge building had fallen. Crawling on her hands and knees, she had wellnigh gained the door; raising herself, she tried to open it; at the same time a large beam above her crashed and fell within a foot of her head; another met it conversely, closing above her, and still not crushing her. Her dress was caught, she stopped to tear it loose with her fingers, and then she tried to climb over the beams: it was impossible; to crawl under them was equally difficult. Falling timbers thickened; she could not move.

The terrible calamity brought scores of men and women to the place. What a sight to meet the eyes of fathers, mothers, brothers! Fragments of looms, tangled webs, and broken pillars—the groans of the dying, the gashed faces of the dead.

Hannah shut her eyes and folded her hands together. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." A strange peace fell upon her spirit. He knew, and she put out her hands and touched the walls of her prison. It would be as He would have it, and she thought calmly.

As night deepened, she could hear the saws: she knew that they were at work outside; but she was so far away. Would they reach her? would they know that she was there? She could hear groans and shrieks: she knew they were dying all around her. She did not think so much of herself: others were wounded, crushed, suffering.

Outside they were at work, men and women.

"It was here I saw Hannah at noon;" and Elizabeth Stewart steadied May Shippen across a portion of the wreck leading to the upper rooms.

"She must be near." They both carried axes in their hands. A fire had been built in the distance, and it cast a red glare over the place where they went to work.

Hannah heard the sharp click of the axes: a terrible thought started up. They were cutting away at the very timbers, perhaps, that walled her in; if they should sink, they would crush her. She put out her hand—yes, she felt them nearer. She tried to speak—her voice was gone; to shout—she could not make a sound. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." She was not conscious of saying it. But the two working outside, with white, rigid faces, heard.

"We can reach her," said Elizabeth.

"There's Johnny Hart," exclaimed May, as a man, blackened, and covered with blood, lifted him out.

"He is dead;" and again she raised her axe.

"Are you sure this is the place?"

"I am sure;" and the blows thickened.

"We must find her: I promised her mother to bring her."

In her prison of fallen beams and rafters, Hannah Belcher heard the voice; she knew it, and she knew May Shippen would not give up.

Again Hannah tried to shout.

"Hark! That is her voice;" and leaning on her axe, May listened.

At that moment there was a cry of "Fire! fire!"—she had not thought of that. The strokes were quicker: great beads of perspiration stood on their foreheads.

"Make haste!" cried a voice, "the fire is spreading. On it comes, a wild sea of flame." It was the voice of Mr. Shippen. "Save yourselves!"

"We must save her: she is here, father!"

There were vigorous strokes of the axe; the smoke blinded them, but Hannah Belcher was safe, and Johnny Hart beyond harm from the fire.

In the hush and quiet of a beautiful room Hannah Belcher lay: a white cloth was around her head, and her hands were listless.

"Where am I?" and she looked around with a bewildered air.

"You have been sick, dear, and now you are better; but we shall not let you talk much;" and Elizabeth Stewart took the thin hands in her own, and talked in a low, soothing voice.

When next the invalid opened her eyes, memory had asserted herself. She remembered that last dreadful night.

"I knew you were there. I heard your voice, and I tried to answer. I don't seem to remember after that. And mother—does she know?" and the invalid made an attempt to rise.

"Mother is here, and she is glad to see these dear eyes open once more."

"Have I been so ill, mother?"

"For ten days, my child."

A tremor passed over the pale face.

"Tell me of the others, mother."

"But few were saved; some to live with limbs amputated."

"How much I have to be thankful for! What ret can I make?" and the tears rolled down her thin cheek

"Give Him your heart," whispered Elizabeth Stewart

"That is not enough. I promised, if He would ke me, with my life would I serve Him; but I am so wortl less."

"The life that Jesus has ransomed cannot be worthless. When you grow stronger, He will give you something to do; He will lead you, opening just the path that He wishes you to take—carrying your burdens, and comforting you by the way."

"I never understood how it was possible to cast a burden upon an unseen Power; a Friend to care for us whose presence we could only feel."

"It seems plainer now?"

"So plain that what was before, is the absurdity. It did not seem that I was left to myself on that fearful night."

"'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'"

"You are sure that He will open a way?"

"'Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

NEARING THE ZENITH.

TIME passed. The spirit of improvement was rife in Wilton. Each year she enlarged her boundaries: new dwellings sprang into existence, and houses of commerce increased. As a power, her influence was widening: the beacons of her faith steady. Dr. Prime was still there, and the new church stood complete — a marvel of architectural beauty. Young men had grown old, and old men had become aged. Society was composed of a new element. Little children had suddenly shot up into youths and maidens: their places filled with others, just as fresh, rosy, and happy.

In the midst of change, the brown house looked the same; swallows twittered in the gables, and the robins built in the lilac-trees.

Philip was no longer in college. His theological studies were nearly finished. Enfeebled by study, and hoping much from vacation, he had gone home, to find a new path mapped out for him. Walter Forrest was in Wilton. Change was strangely visible in him. As a ship suddenly tacks and starts off into another direction, so in his case. The ambition of his youth had departed; the hopes of usefulness had blossomed into beauty. A foreign tour was prescribed for him, and together with Judge Staples and Dr. Prime, he had persuaded Philip to accompany him. A consultation was held on the veranda, and the result was that Philip's ordination would be deferred a year.

"Physical and mental strength should harmonize: the great fault of our students is that they rush on so heedlessly from one course to another. In order that the mind may take its highest flights, the body must rest occasionally. Life is not a treadmill, neither is it a workhouse," said Dr. Wiseman.

"A year of travel will do you more good than books," added Dr. Prime; "beside, you will not be exempt from study: looking upon works of art, visiting universities, listening to lectures, improving and strengthening your mental force, giving point to thought, and vigor to speech; and enabling you to prove an effective worker in the cause of Christ."

"If you could go with us," Philip said to May; and watching the ferns, and the fountain, the miniature lake, and the small boat, they talked of the future.

The factory in Holden was rebuilt, and the church was also completed. A sudden impulse was given to business. Wealth accumulated, and taste was everywhere visible. From one school, there were now several; and the operatives enjoyed every needful advantage for mental culture and spiritual improvement.

Laying the foundation on which others were to build, Elizabeth Stewart was called to a broader field: her home was in a distant city—the light, the joy of a pastor's dwelling.

From that fearful night in which Hannah Belcher was carried to Elizabeth Stewart's home, she had studied; graduating with honor, and now a teacher in the new seminary at Wilton. Harvey Belcher, the wild, untamable boy, was shaping his life wisely.

The inspiration of genius had coined a home for Alfred Brown; and his library was a place where a scholar and a musician could delight himself. The small viol left

by his father stood in an alcove, a reminder; but no longer used. Another, of modern make and sweeter tones, was subject to his touch. As a musical composer he was winning celebrity; and the wealth of his intellect was only equalled by the purity of his life. The world of music in which he lived, beautifying his home, and rendering his life a blessed gift of the Creator, was not confined to one place or locality: like the splendor of a cloud, the rosy flush of the heavens, filling the soul with rapture and lifting the beholder above the cares and annoyances of life — so with his songs: a sweet, subtle influence stealing into the heart, purging away the dross, and refining the taste — rendering the soul stronger, and better able to battle with temptation. A blessed gift, the golden link in the chain from earth to heaven.

Independent, and warmly attached to her brother, Katy's home was still with the Shippens, more as a companion than a serving-woman. "I can't forget that we owe it all to you," if anything was said of her leaving, till at length it came to be a settled thing. Katy's home was with May Shippen.

Sitting on the veranda, with the moonbeams crowning her hair, May Shippen's face was still as unclouded as it was when she first clasped Felix in her arms, strong in the resolve to be a guide and a mother to the helpless babe. The lithe figure and delicate proportions of the girl had rounded into womanly strength and beauty; while over all the confidence and sweet simplicity of a nature singularly pure and lovely.

"It makes me feel old," Robert once said to her, responsibility and care pressing out the joyous abandon of early life. Robert was as tall as Philip now, his arm was quite as strong, and his mind poised on the same height. Narrowing the circle made them only the more dependent

upon each other, and Felix was able to take his turn in conversation, let it be grave or gay.

Music, that glorious painting to the ear, that rich mastery of the gloomier as well as the joyous emotions of our nature, had its daily, hourly influence: the mellow harmonies of instruments blending with human voices, floating upward like a cloud of incense, bearing the aspirations of love and gratitude. Ethel was no longer a little girl; her loveliness like the opening bud beside the mature beauty of her elder sister.

Mr. Shippen's health had failed materially.

"I have been thinking, father, that the farm is too much for you," said May, as her father entered, looking faint and exhausted.

"A little effort does tire me. I am growing old, perhaps."

"Your children are," returned May, with a smile.

"Warren wants the farm; I may as well let him have it. The immediate grounds will furnish me with all the exercise I need; and in case anything should occur—" and Mr. Shippen was silent.

It was strange to see Felix bring the cows, whistling, up the lane, just as Philip had done years before.

How much of her life had been spent in watching Felix! and back they came: the memories of other years. Instinctively, she rests her head on her hand, and with the other grasps the green-and-gold book. There are days in which it is not opened; but it lies there just the same: the sight of it pacifies the hungerings that will come up. She does not question as she used to do; neither does she fear. When the way is dark, He leads her by the hand.

"A letter from Philip," as Robert enters. The lamp is lit, and they look at the pictures of the Old World—the vineyards of France, the majesty of the Rhine, the diver-

sities of Germany. Philip has a rare power of word-painting; and they follow, winding through old abbeys, moss-covered and worm-eaten; looking upon works of art, visiting universities, and learning from the great page of human nature. The four walls expand into a continent; and socially they sit down with crowds of beings whose acquaintance they now make for the first time.

"I do not expect to study in Germany, but I may go there, perhaps;" and the young artist dares to talk of a winter in Rome, and another in Florence.

Without knowing why, May is sad: try as she will, the shadow will not remove. She goes to her room—it follows her; peeps over her shoulder as she opens her journal; tortures her in a thousand nameless ways, and at last compels her to put it all aside.

Opening the window, she looked out: the moonlight, asleep on the hillside and in the valleys, had a refreshing influence on her mind. Throwing back the magnificent masses of brown hair, the wind played over the feverish forehead. There was a sense of beauty, of lofty grandeur; but no feeling of rest. Imagination was awakened: she saw in the crescent, as it sailed up the blue transparency, a gallery crowded with forms of surpassing loveliness; faces that smiled upon her, and hands that showered treasures to be collected by hers alone. Even here, the shadow followed her: the picture darkened; and at length it was only a menacing visage enlarged to an immeasurable magnitude, and ready to discharge arrows of wrath, and indignation; or an orb with mountains and oceans swinging loose, and ready to discharge themselves at any moment.

With a vague, indefinite feeling of dread, she turned away; the moonbeams were climbing up the wall, and resting on a face calm and beautiful. The eyes, so full of

life, are almost reproachful in their expression. It is the saddest, sweetest, most living, most feminine face. In agony, the poor girl reaches out her arms—"Mother! dear mother!" She did not think to speak aloud, and the words recalled her to herself. A cloud passed between her and the moon; the sweet face was shadowed, and a silvery light falls on another—our Saviour crowned with thorns. The moon shines full and clear: the 'Man of Sorrows' with eyes raised pleadingly, "Father, forgive them;" her own grief has passed away: ransomed at such a cost, and bowing her head to the casement, she implores forgiveness and strength to do and bear according to His will.

A light noise in her father's room led her to leave the casement. It was late—perhaps he was ill; and vibrating between the wish to go and the fear of disturbing, she sat still. In a neighboring thicket the night-bird began her song, touchingly sweet and tender. Could it be the bird was conscious—a thorn piercing her side, and forcing her to give vent to her anguish in notes of such delicious sweetness? The effect calmed her. The glimmer of a light, as she crossed the hall, caused her to turn. Her father's door was slightly open.

"Are you ill, father?" and she set her lamp on the table, and stood bending over his chair.

"I did not feel like sleep, and there were several letters to write."

His voice was strangely hollow, and his eyes unusually brilliant. A quick glance at the table showed letters yellowed by time; a long curl of soft, brown hair.

"You will sleep now, father;" and she pressed her lips to his forehead.

"I have written to Warren about the farm. It is better so: the house and grounds are enough for us." Then drawing May to his knee, "You have been a good sister. What would these boys have done without you?"

"If they only make good men, father."

"They have been good boys. I trust they will make good men."

"You are overtaxed, father, and I am keeping you from sleep."

"You have been a good girl, May; you have kept us together;" and a shower of kisses fell on the upturned face.

At the door she turned, and came slowly back. He looked so pale, and his eyes burned so brightly. "Can I do anything for you, father?" leaning over his chair to wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

"You are growing strangely like your mother, child. I am glad;" and rising, he lay his hand on the brown head.

Alone in her room, strength gave way: she had never seen him so deeply moved. Might not his work be almost done? as he so often said. The thought was agony; and going with all of her wants and needs to the Great Father, she realized the consolation that comes from intimate communion, the blessedness of knowing that whatever occurs, or can take place, it is well.

The morning came; breakfast was delayed. "Father was up so late," May said. At length, Katy went to his door: her face white as she came down.

"The bed is not tumbled, and he's just sitting by the table, white and still."

Robert took the stairs at a leap, and May followed as fast as her trembling limbs would allow. The lamp burned dimly, filling the room with a faint, sickly breath. Just as May left him: one of the yellow letters clasped in his hand, the curl of long, brown hair falling over his fingers.

White and still, he did not heed their tears, did not feel the clasping of their arms. Dr. Wiseman was soon there. It was needless—the brittle thread had snapped—twilight had merged into a cloudless day.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CLOUD AT NOONDAY.

ROBERT SHIPPEN had studied with a purpose in view. Morning and night he had worked at his models, looking forward to the time when he could visit the studios of those whose names had come down to him from the height—a view of which he hoped, one day, to gain. The sudden responsibility resting upon him dimmed the rosy flush of his day-dreaming: a cold, gray wall rose up before him, effectually shutting out the splendor of crystal battlements; pillars of porphyry, with arches and colonnades rising one over the other against the blue background.

"Roses bridge the chasm, and danger lurks where we least expect it. Short-sighted as we are, with snares and pitfalls at every step, how sweet to think there is One to guide—doing away with care and anxiety," whispered May.

"But, sister, I have counted upon it so long."

"Giving thoughts that were due to Him, perhaps; glorying in your power to follow when others lead. Art must be secondary."

"We are so constituted, that there must be of necessity one all-absorbing topic."

"You mean by that, if we would attain anything in life, we must seek it heart and soul?"

"We must concentrate our energies; otherwise, they run to waste."

"True; there must be a plan, and we steadily adhere to it, husbanding our strength, concentrating our forces, doing as if the result depended upon our effort—still following where He leads, praying to be led in a plain path—and, all the time, anxious to choose for ourselves;" and May's calm eyes rested on the boy's face.

"I cannot make it out, sister. We have to do, and do with our might, and still it profits nothing."

"The apprentice works diligently: the rules are before him, the eye of the master is upon him; he makes mistakes, is subject to reproof—but, in no wise discouraged, works on."

"But, sister, there is a time for everything; so much depends upon our judgment: if we let the moment slip!"

"The apprentice does not depend upon his own judgment; he works according to the dictates of his master. If he makes mistakes, provided that he does his work faithfully, he does not grieve over it; neither does he condemn himself; but with cheerful alacrity rectifies it."

"Do you mean by this that we are apprentices?"

"In a certain sense. We are here to do the work given us to do."

"And we have somebody to tell us how to do it?"

"The apprentice is not expected to know; he simply does what he is told to do."

"Or as children," interrupted Robert; "but children are expected to make mistakes."

"That is it, Robert: children are expected to make mistakes; they are not to sit idle because of this, neither consume their energies in useless grieving; but, bright and happy, make another effort. Perfection is not expected. Obedience is all that is required."

"Can we be sure always that He leads us?"

"We can be sure of this, if we ask Him."

"Is there not danger, if we lean upon Him so implicitly, tnat we shall become inactive?"

"An obedient child does not become inactive, slothful, and inefficient, because he feels that his father will take care of him: a judicious parent gives him certain duties, and for these he is responsible. The love of friends is precious, and human sympathy is above price; but the sweet privilege of going to Jesus with all of our wants, confiding to Him our secret thoughts, asking counsel of Him, leaning upon Him, trusting His love, and knowing that if best for our interest, He will bring it to pass;" and a radiant light gleamed on the pure, calm face.

"We may tell Him this without irreverence, May?"

"Was it irreverent when you drew your chair very near to father, and told him of your plans, the hopes and fears, the little ambitious feeling creeping out; having no concealments because you knew his love, knew that he would understand you, and, by knowing all your heart, could the better counsel you?"

"This was the charm of our lives: father was one of us. If I ever thought or did anything bad, I wanted him to know it. I always felt better for telling him everything in my heart."

"Go to Jesus just so: there is no irreverence in telling Him our inmost thoughts. He will not repel us if we press very near Him. He loves to have us come. Time and place make an effectual difference in the reception we receive from earthly friends; bodily infirmities and circumstances over which we have no control. And oftentimes, when our hearts are sorest, an inadvertent word, a look, the simple lack of a hand pressure, has power to stab us through and through. With Him there is neither change nor shadow of turning; and when our hearts are sorest His love is most tender."

Silently Ethel crept up and lay her head on May's knee, while Felix sat at the study-table, quietly listening.

"Does this trust come to us at once?" asked Ethel.

"A ray of light dawns on the understanding, and a word may kindle love; but confidence in Jesus, the trust, the unreserved spontaneity of the heart comes not at once. It is only when the waters roll over us, sweeping away our props, that we are willing to talk with Him, as with one whom we know and love."

Noiselessly the night spread her wings over the gabled house, and angel visitants crossed the threshold. It did not seem so far away, and Robert looked up, knowing, feeling that if best, a way would surely open. A new resolve was in his heart: he would not question. And Ethel nestled the closer in her love, a little child to be led, not driven.

The sun of prosperity dwarfs intellectual life, and spiritual beauty often fades into insignificance. Like the dew and the shower, God sends affliction grievous as hiding His face; but working for His children a far more exceeding glory.

The dwellers of the gabled house were anxious to profit by His teaching; they had no desire to be cumberers of the ground: fruit was the object, and to secure this, leaves must be swept aside in order that the Divine rays could penetrate to the very heart. In Philip's absence, Robert felt it to be an imperative duty to stand foremost in the care of the family: bravely to bear the burden, let it conflict with inclination as it might.

"I see nothing why you may not study, and work as usual," said May. "An obstruction in your path does not of necessity imply that you are to turn aside: simply to wait the will of the guide, whose understanding of the way enables him to provide for every emergency."

"I did not think of that;" and a new light sprang into Robert's eyes. "To stand and wait, simply;" and he lingered over each word.

"Not passive, as an idler; but watchful, learning wisdom from the very impediments that rise up before you."

"Does God ever do this, simply to try us?" asked Ethel.

"There is purpose in everything that He does, a design; and spiritual growth is the result. It is as much the duty of the soldier to 'halt,' as it is to 'march.' Prompt obedience is all the General demands. The disciplinarian knows when to be severe, as well as when to be tender. What is not effected by one process, he will surely accomplish by another."

"And out of each event we are to learn something," murmured Ethel.

"A lesson may be learned in an hour, recited, and marked: a certain impression made, and speech fluent. But to unravel the hidden beauty, to drink in the fine conception with the understanding, to stamp its precepts upon the heart, requires time, a careful study, and a patient plodding effort over each word and accent."

"Just as a painting has need to be studied, or a rare mosaic: the beauty and harmony growing upon one," remarked Robert.

"I have often thought of that," said Ethel, with a dash of enthusiasm in her voice. "There are pictures that I know by heart, and still I do not tire of looking at them: a haunting look, a mysterious beauty not yet solved, an invincible attraction winning me to return."

"I remember how happy I used to be when Judge Staples invited me to look at his pictures. Try as I would, I could never get away from that head, bathed in twilight half-tints, enveloped in folds of transparent gauze, the

sweet, fair face drowned in a violet vapor—more like the creation of a dream than a reality," returned Robert.

"It requires time for such work," continued May.

"A lesson for me: looking for finished work when I have scarcely begun."

"Finished up to your ability, for the time. A long apprenticeship is due before the best student can use his wings."

"And I am muttering because mine are not full-fledged;" and Robert spoke in his odd, boyish fashion.

"A weak and undecided flight, if commenced before the wings are strong. The more perfect our ideal, the nearer we shall approach to it. Even genius requires guidance. The mind that can create, and the hand that can execute, must be disciplined."

The clock ticked on the mantel, and the fire gave out a ruddy light.

"I will leave it with Him, studying, and working just as I have been doing: there will come a time, perhaps."

"Leaving it with Him does not allow of uneasiness. Human understanding cannot fathom the depth of His love. Of this we are assured: One that has already done so much for us, will not willingly refuse the desire of our hearts when we go to Him with the spirit of children. Let us not forget that we are children—little children," said May.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLD FACES AND OLD FRIENDS.

THE sun reclined on a couch of crimson cloud. The sound of the instrument came soothingly upon the air: sounds of such alternate spirit and sweetness, such heart-reaching power, that they won May into listening. Ethel's voice had the sweetness and the flow of song, and her face had the womanly charm of serenity. Bathed in the twilight of a curtained window, her soul gushing out in waves of melody, she seemed like the spirit of music imprisoned in a form of grace and beauty.

Slowly May's work slipped through her fingers; and before she was aware, her thoughts wandered backward. How vividly it rises up before her: the sudden, solemn weight of responsibility witnessed by the angels. How well she remembers as she crept up to her room, laying the baby on the pillow, and kneeling before it; while the sobs nearly choked her. Withal of this, a strange peace brooded over her: she felt that Jesus knew—the thoughts of her heart were open before Him; and when she met her father, there was strength to comfort him. It did not seem so long ago: she had not marked the time by years, but by events; and there was a habit of keeping the lost in remembrance, feeling their presence day by day, that served to throw in the shade the precise time of their leaving, smitten; but without scars.

The horizon glowed like an ocean of amber, and the fine countenance assumed a look of loftiness, loveliness, and

repose. There are influences of the air, of the calmly setting sun that lifts the soul up as the flight of a bird; the mountains of care and perplexity fading into molehills; when visions come and go, the ladder of faith resting against jasper walls, and the white-winged throng bearing messages to the inhabitants of earth.

The touch faltered, the song died away. Gliding from her seat, Ethel lay her head on May's knee, and pressed her hand lovingly.

"A long time since we heard from Philip, sister. It seems to me that I miss him more at this hour than any other."

"For the reason that he was usually with us at this hour, we expected him."

"It is the hour he told me to think of him;" and with half-averted face, Ethel breathed into May's ear the little confidences of her girlhood.

A light-hearted, mellow whistle, and Robert and Felix entered.

"You may have the first reading;" and Felix drew from his pocket a package of letters. Then turning to Robert, there was a little strife to know which should milk: Felix bearing off the pail, dropping the bars, and patting Bess; while Robert turned to stop a gap in the garden fence.

"It's here they come in, I'm thinking;" and Katy showed the traces of feminine ingenuity and skill in keeping out the neighbors' hens.

"Little things to do so much damage," said Katy, scooping up the brown earth in her hands, and hedging round the plants with yawning scratches leaving bare the roots.

"It is hard to provide against little things," replied Robert, as his blows told; "the fact is, we fail to see them in time: had the whole side of the fence been down this

morning. I should have seen it; but this small gap, half hidden by the roses, escaped me altogether. I half suspect it is so with other things, Katy: the secret faults lurking under some charm or illusion, letting in a brood of evils;" and Robert went for more nails.

"If we could nail them up as easily," said Katy, under her breath; "but just when one don't mean to forget, up they come, and then all the work has to be done over again."

"With yesterday's experience, May would say."

"It's just that makes it bearable, having to fight the same things; but every day on higher ground;" and Katy walked back to the house.

"It is possible that Katy has learned more than I have;" and Robert put up his hammer; "'but every day on higher ground.'"

"I feel like setting a chair for Philip," said Ethel, as Katy rang her bell for tea. A swift look shot out of May's eyes, but she said nothing. It is very possible that Katy's mind was tinctured, more or less, with the delicate superstitions of her race. Be it that, or something else, a chair was set and a plate laid for one that did not come.

May had gone to the table, still grasping the letter that brought the absent so vividly to mind. Reaching out her hand, she dropped it on the empty plate, and began pouring out her tea as usual.

There was another from Elizabeth Stewart—now Mrs. Hosford—with an urgent request that May and Ethel would visit the city.

"It is just the thing, and I motion that you accept it," said Robert, gayly.

"I second that motion;" and Felix jumped out of his chair.

"What say you, pet?" and Robert turned to Ethel.

"I should like very much to go."

When May went to her room, the half-formed purpose of her heart had taken shape. Since her father's death, her journal had won more of her time; and from a few words once dropped by Dr. Prime, she had spent her strength on a manuscript, growing day by day, and giving rise to a shadowy, half-formed idea of a book, filled with words of comfort to those whom otherwise she would never be able to reach. This trip to the city would open a way for personal knowledge of publishers, book-makers, and booksellers. And the result was, she accepted.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME AGAIN.

A MONTH in the city was an event in Ethel's life, and it was twice that time before she exhausted the description of people she had met, and places she had visited: the art-galleries, the music, the rare combination of wealth and taste. "After all, I saw no place to equal my own home, no pictures so beautiful as I find here."

"You are a flatterer;" and Robert petted the golden curls. "I never saw it till this visit to the city."

"I never knew before how much I loved this old home. Every part of it is dear to me."

"A haunted house."

"Others see what is; but to us, the 'has been' is distinct and clear."

"A bridge of light, instead of dusty stairs, crossed and recrossed."

While May told of the pastor and his wife, the glory of the work given them to do: the leader of a flock diverse in culture, and in means to live, calling for skilful lessons: teaching the rich to give of their abundance; and to the poor, content.

"A great work!" and Robert paused to ask if he had chosen wisely.

"All are not to work in the same field; neither are they to do the same work. The architect does not carry mortar, nor does the bricklayer conflict with the carpenter. A house is not built by workmen of the same craft."

"But there are places more desirable, occupations more congenial; and where it would seem greater good could be effected."

"Natural inclination is to bias our choice, and education, when based on a love for certain work, carries us farther. Years of study could not make a poet, a painter, or a sculptor."

"Everybody has a work?" questioned Ethel.

"A work that, however bungling one may do it, is not to be done by another."

"With an inclination for that particular work?"

"There is, without doubt, something that each one can do, and do well. The reason we see so many failures, is that circumstances are taken into consideration, stifling the inner voice, and paying no attention to the demands of duty."

"That recalls the manufacturing establishment we visited," replied Ethel; "each man with his own work. I was particularly impressed with piano-making: the innumerable pieces fitting with exactness, and looking, when finished, as the work of one man, carved out of solid wood."

"A good representation of the work we have to do: different rooms, and varied machinery, with numerous workmen; each skilled in his own particular fashion, fitting a block, or a beam, as it is given him to do."

"Are we to go to God, and ask Him about every little thing?" asked Felix.

"In God's great plan there is nothing small or trivial: the humblest life cost the death of the Son of God. Does it not throw a veil of sanctity around the poorest and most unworthy, when we think of the ransom paid for such a life?"

Adam True was spending his vacation in Wilton. A

good student, and of marked ability, he was petted by Deacon Stiles in proportion as he was once neglected. Even Miss Hazard assured her friends that she always predicted Adam would rise in the world. Adam cherished only a spirit of gratitude, and the angles were smoothly rounded.

Among the visits made in the city, May never mentioned one to an author: one who coined his own thoughts into marketable property, to be scattered by the publisher among the masses. A man with outreaching ideas, and a broad charity—aiming to live so that the world should be the better for his having lived in it. Very kindly he received her, winning her to read portions of her manuscript; appreciating, where he found appreciation due, and pointing out defects with the tenderness of one whom success had not left unmindful of former struggles.. By his advice, the manuscript was left in the hands of a well-known publisher, with the understanding that it would be accepted or rejected according to its merit.

Weeks passed; and May saw in the delay only refusal. Of course, they found it weak—if not worthless; and now she felt how really ambitious she had been, how much her heart had staked upon this venture.

Sitting in the cheerful room, with the reminders of the loved about her, she saw, as in the mirror of Agrippa, the devious path by which she had been led—the struggles, doubts, fears—reaching smooth resting-places. Weighed down with burdens, and frequently too dark to see the path, she would have fallen but for His strong arm.

Once more the pen glides over the paper: the mists have cleared above the heights. Ambition is swept away: "faithfully to use the gifts received, is all He asks."

A merry ring of voices in the hall, and the parlor-door opened.

"What do you think, May, of my turning professor, and staying in Wilton?" Robert asked.

"Have you a proposition to that effect?"

"Mr. Flanders desires me to take a class in drawing: the school is much larger than he anticipated, and he has made no provision for this branch."

"If you have time, it may be well to do it. The study needful for you to give efficient aid to others, would, no doubt, prove a benefit to yourself."

"I have never had the instruction of a regular professor."

"You have the advantage of taste, and natural inclination, together with systematic knowledge won from books."

"Then you think it feasible?"

"Provided you have time."

"I can find time."

"By time, I mean without hurry and bustle. The mind that achieves must be master of itself, must be the master of circumstances."

"You do away with the go-aheadativeness of the age."

"Not with the go-aheadativeness, but with the confusion. Nature knows nothing of hurry and commotion. The planets move on in their orbits, and the stars hold their course. There is no hurry, no danger of collision."

"All this from order."

"Order that is quite as needful for us. If our hands are full, our mental forces taxed to the limit of their capacity, our work-system balanced, there is room for nothing more. Our field does not admit of waste places."

The moon reclined on a bank of cloud, like a sultana on a couch of silver; the starry court was dazzling. Ethel gazed with eyes bewildered: the gables, cornices, and turrets stood draped in soft, fleecy snow—not a speck or a blemish; the door-posts and the window-tops wreathed with the same feathery appearance.

"The snow is a rare designer; but the charm is in its purity," said May. "I like to think of that line: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.' There is to me something incomparably beautiful and pure in the snow."

Alone in her room, May drew from her pocket a letter that she had carried all day. It was from the publisher with whom her manuscript was left, and so sure was she that it brought only refusal, she had not the courage to open it. Once more she thinks of the conflict of the morning — the want of trust, knowing that whatever is for her good, will surely be given her.

Slowly she broke the seal, trembling, and still ashamed of her fears. A fine, white mist covered her eyes — she could not see. But from the first word there was an assurance that all was well. Joy brings tears quite as readily as grief; but most of all, she wept the want of confidence in the Great Disposer of all things. Doing her best, she knew that it was her privilege to leave it with Him, and not to hesitate when the answer came. In any event, according to His will.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOPE DEFERRED.

AS the spring opened, Philip's letters spoke of home. Walter Forrest's health had greatly improved, and he was looking forward to a life of active labor in the city of his birth.

"We have not been idle," wrote Philip; "neither have we been sight-seers merely. We have listened to lectures from the most learned of the universities, studied theology as we had leisure; ever keeping the great plan before us, and careful that every species of knowledge we gain, every thing we see—whether picture, castle, or cathedral —shall add to mental strength, fitting us to prove more efficient laborers in the place it will be ours to fill."

Since Robert had taken the charge of a class in the seminary, he was more engaged with the pencil: drawing a landscape, copying a head, moulding a figure; his heart knitting round his work in such a way as to render it evident to all this department of labor was especially his own.

"It will not take from your studies?" questioned Dr. Prime, as he examined Robert's work. "Of all men, the artist needs discipline: his imagination is lofty, soaring, creative—it must be trained; taking nothing from its flight, but teaching it where to go. His judgment, as the negative power, must be strengthened, his taste refined. With the grandest themes he must learn to combine the most diligent details. The artist has not only to create the soul of a work, but to mould, limb by limb, the body that

soul is to inhabit. The gushing flow of thought and feeling must be guided with studied care through subtleties the most perplexing. In his hand the marble must be pliable as so much clay, taking shape and life according to the ideal of his brain."

By nature Robert was possessed of intense fervor, united to an intenser calm. There was no undue excitement: when at school, he studied as if the issues of a lifetime hung upon the mastery of that particular lesson; and when his books were laid aside, he grasped the pencil with the same fervor — moulded and chipped with the same calm, steady fire.

May was now fairly launched on the sea of letters: her first work was a success. Critics found more to commend than to censure; and by universal consent, it was pronounced a work that would live after the foam and fermentation had passed away. Hers was not an activity goaded on by outward necessity. Want never crossed her threshold; and eating, cankering care was unknown to her. Still was she impelled to write: her nature demanded it; the gushings of her heart welling up as easily as a bird's, aiming at nothing beyond her power to execute; dropping her words as the farmer his seed, leaving others to garner the harvest. But what glorified her writing, winging it with power, was the charm of piety — never so beautiful as in youth, and in woman; purifying the affections, giving dignity to learning, exciting others to lives of usefulness and honor.

The rest of summer had begun. Robert and Felix were exempt from regular studies, and Ethel busy in learning many things connected with the comfort of a home. Adam True was spending his vacation in Wilton. The gabled house was full of life and motion: everything looked cheerful; but to May there was a deep, underlying

sadness: the birds echoed it in their songs, it mingled in the spray of the fountain, danced in the air, and breathed in the perfume of the flowers. There was a subdued tenderness, a creeping up of reveries, and dim, shadowy forebodings.

Adam True was not alone in his love of missionary work. Ethel Shippen dreamed of this, and Hannah Belcher had fully decided upon this field. Sitting on the veranda, conversation no longer turned upon art, but upon the needs of a world buried in heathen darkness; the privilege of having to do in the great work; the glory and beauty of winning souls to Christ. In this, May took a part, not always able to keep the tears as she looked upon the sweet face, and thought of the suffering and privation that must be hers; listening, as her fingers ran over the keys, and questioning if this was not a talent that would be buried.

"I am so glad that I can sing!" exclaimed Ethel, as she turned from the instrument, to find May in tears. "Music has no need of translation; the heart of the uncivilized is open to it; the hardest heart it will melt. I am glad, so very glad, that I can sing. Think of that, May: it will dry up all the tears."

There was no reply: and the two sat with clasped hands. A new chord vibrated in May's heart: she knew the power of songs without words, and she felt humbled as she saw how really blind she had been: taking it for granted this talent, that she had cultivated with such care, would be as nothing in the field in which Ethel was appointed to labor. Already, she saw dusky groups listening in rapture, and long before the tongue could master speech: she felt assured of love that lingers not for the slow growth of words.

The sickle hung in its place; the granaries were full of

yellow corn. Autumn went over the hills with hasty strides, the flounces of her robe caught on the thickets, the leaves brightening as she passed. The sky was soft, and the air came sweeping over apple-orchards and fields brown with stubble: busy hands, and active, working brains gave keen relish to the dwellers in the gabled house. Philip was coming, and the rooms wore a bright, cheerful look.

"He loves flowers, and I will just fill a vase and set it in his room," Katy said to herself. A strange love Katy had for flowers; weaving them in with skill, and talking to them as to friends. "I know he likes these—I've heard him say so, many a time;" and she set them on the table, turning to look as she went out, and adding a sprig of myrtle and another cluster of scarlet geranium. At night, a plate was laid, and a chair set. "He will be tired and hungry," Katy said; "if you please, I'll keep the supper waiting for an hour," to May, as she sat within the door.

"A letter, sister; and Philip is not come;" and Robert leaned against the door, and shut his white lips firmly.

"Tell me, Robert—is he ill?"

"Walter is—they say he cannot live; and Philip will not leave him."

That night the journal grew beyond the average of a night's growth. There were eyes that would not close in sleep.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOING HOME.

BEFORE the moon had touched the limit of her silver horn, news came. Walter saw plainly that he could not live, and he would die at home. With tears it was no weakness for men to shed, they bore him in their arms to the steamer; stopping now and then to say good-by to some poor man, perchance, a woman, with wooden shoes, or vicious-looking child, remembering him as one who had been kind; giving good words, and love.

"To England first," he said to Philip; "for if I fail to reach my own loved land, I shall sleep sweetly there."

Once out, the salt sea-breeze revived him. Strength came back; and sitting on the deck, wrapped in his sea-cloak, he talked with Philip of the time when fresh from college he first made the trip, the hopes and ambitions of his youth, the year he spent abroad, flashing through cities, and seeing sights that left him none the better—of his return, and then of Belle. "How changed the world since then! the rosy flush, the tangled colors glassed in the waves, more permanent than the life-shadows men follow. In love God sent the shaft that rent my heart in twain, and from my eyes tore the thick scales that hindered me from seeing the glorious beauty of His face."

Days slipped away: he grew to be a favorite with the men; entering into the sailors' life with sympathy, talking to them of God, and of His wonders in the deep, leading them up to Him as to a friend. At length, there came a

day: the sea was molten glass, ingrained with colors woven by the sun in clouds of mist; the ship like a thing of life, speeding her way. On deck the sufferer lay. "Not quite as well," he said, as the men passed him, and the captain stopped to take his hand.

"I was in hopes to find you stronger as we neared the land."

"I shall not reach England."

"And if you do not?"

"It is well."

Far away a sail was seen, like a white-winged bird—now distinct and clear, then fading slowly, till entirely lost.

"Just so with us: the sea of life crossed and re-crossed;" and with the captain's hand still clasped in his, the sick man talked. "To the sailor, the sea is home—he loves it: the white, blossoming waves more beautiful than a gay parterre. His life is here, and here a sudden death may find him. If such should be the case, would it be well? Should your ship go down, would your soul be safe?"

"A sailor's life is made up of hardship: cradled in danger, he knows no fear; indifferent he may be, but not wholly forgetful. The glory of the world above, the splendor of the world beneath, tell him of God."

"But do you know Him as a God of love?"

"I blush to say that I have never given Him my love, neither have I claimed His for myself."

"The Bible tells us what He has done for us;" and brokenly, as strength allowed, the sufferer told the simple story of the Cross.

The sound of bells announced the change of watch. The captain's eyes were full of tears as he went down. Walter did not seem as strong; lying with closed eyes, his

hand in Philip's, his cheek crimsoned with fever. Midnight found him sinking rapidly, the life-blood gushing over his white lips.

"He will not revive," as the surgeon stooped over him. In vain Philip called him by name—there was no response. At length, the eyes opened with something of their old light. "It is well;" and there was a slight pressure of the clasping fingers; "it is well."

Morning swept over the sea, and the waves were crested with golden splendor. Slowly the bell tolled, and passing in file, the men took their places on the deck. Every face was sad; and Philip's heart was wellnigh broken. Walter was there, but calm and still; his watch was ended. Reverently, a chapter was read, a hymn sung, and a prayer offered—and then a pause, in which the quick-drawn breath showed the deep pressure. With eyes averted, and dim with unshed tears, they shrouded the body in a sack; and the bell tolled as the plunge was made. A few uneasy circles growing less, and the watery gate closed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOME PICTURES.

THE old practice of rising early had been strictly adhered to during the winter; May working at her manuscript, and Robert shaping and chipping, with an occasional exclamation to himself or to his model. Ethel had her tasks, and Felix was not idle while Katy prepared breakfast; and not unfrequently, Alfred Brown dropped in, opened the piano, and played his last: always rewarded with the warmest thanks, and a sight of Katy's delicious cakes, which he was sure to refuse—"The little mother must not breakfast alone."

Philip's letters were now from England. He had a friend there—a professor, whom he used to know; it was his purpose, provided they could spare him, to spend a few months. And May did not question. "He can study there quite as well, perhaps better;" and she wrote him to stay.

"In the mean time we have so much to do," she said to Ethel. "Your wardrobe will be plain, but you must have enough to last several years; by rising early, we can easily do it."

May Shippen was a woman to do things easily. It was not in her nature to be noisy and boisterous; and still was she cheerful, and apparently light-hearted. If troubled, she had a Friend in whom she could confide, and with this came a calm, restful feeling; showing itself in her face, and making her hands helpful. Whatever she had to do,

she did it noiselessly—so noiselessly that she failed to win credit from a certain class; sure that if one does not appear in the morning slipshod, with hair in curl-papers and sleeves rolled to the elbow, a brush in one hand and a broom in the other, they, of course, have nothing to do. A most notable housekeeper she certainly was, but brush nor broom sent her brothers from the house; neither was her appearance in anywise calculated to give them a disrelish for home, and home society.

There is something exhilarating in rising early—a certain free expanding of the breathing powers, taking a full, deep draught, as if the atmosphere was sure to deteriorate as the world shook itself from sleep. May opened her window and looked out: the heavens were almost cloudless; the gray twilight hanging like a pale shadow over the sleeping village, curling around the gables, and falling low over the marble in the quiet grave-yard—paler and paler, and now the moon and her attendant star are fading to the westward. All is silent—still. Slowly her eyes turn from the quiet resting-place to the handsome church—the church that her mother never saw. The old one stands there still, its spire strangely in keeping with the new.

The tinge has deepened to a rose, the topmost pinnacle of the church is touched with golden light, and almost at that signal a shower of wings, as the robins slip from their beds in the tall oaks, and the swallows dart with ringing cries across the yard. Down toward the fountain, then upward in graceful curves, catching as they fly gleams of golden light on their white breasts: the day has begun.

Before the door Felix walked to and fro, running over his lesson, and repeating the fragment of a Greek ode; while Ethel's song floated upward, and Katy made cheerful stir in the breakfast-room. Glancing downward, May saw that Robert's shutter was open; she heard the click of

the chisel: it was the first block of marble Robert had tried to fashion, and she knew the boy saw a beauty there that in time he would reveal to others.

It was not an hour for dreams; and still there was a tear on her cheek, a sharp, quick pain at her heart. Slipping away—every day was bringing it nearer. She was willing, and still her heart throbbed with a sharp sense of loneliness. She knew they could not always stay under the same roof. It was one thing to look at it in the distance; but to grasp the truth, to feel what it is to sit alone in the room haunted with memories of what has been—and she shrank timidly as the trial came.

Busy hands tone down the quick pulsation of the brain, and May kept hers full; while Katy found ample time, and Miss Hazard volunteered her aid.

Summer deepened; lush roses followed sweet spring flowers; the young apple-tree by the spring struck its roots into the soil with a firm determination to live; the ferns and the foxgloves were there, but May did not frequent it as usual. "There will be time enough," she whispered to herself; "the house will soon be lonely, and the ferns and the foxgloves will bring sweeter messages when I can no longer hear their voices."

Philip had not arrived; but it was so near the time! May had given her consent for Robert to go out at the same time with Adam and Ethel, especially as Judge Staples had an artist friend—a man of well-known worth and established reputation—who would make one of the company. Eager as Robert was, he did not press it: he knew how lonely they would be without him. Withal of this, there were visits to make, and good-byes to say. The factory was visited, and the operatives spoken to in turn; with neighborly calls, dropping in with little words and innumerable kindnesses. The heart of the community was tender, the silken thread

of love vibrated with sweeter music than they had known before: rough natures softened, and the eyes of tender mothers filled as they looked upon the cherished of their households, and wondered would they have the grace to send them cheerfully. Gypsy learned the road from Deacon Stiles's to the gabled house, the light wagon filled with packages — "Sure to be needed," the deacon said.

Sitting on the veranda summer nights, watching the fountain, freighting the small ship, and tracing out the stars, had been to the dwellers of the brown house a rare delight; a time when hearts were knit more closely; thoughts inwoven with the coming breath to be remembered — loved. This summer there were fewer words, and added tenderness. The joy of being together shadowed with the loneliness of sitting apart; spoken words no more to gauge the depth of the unspoken, reading each others' faces as one reads a pleasant book.

"It will only make Him nearer," said May, playing with the rings of Robert's hair; her smile replete with a sweet gravity that lent her face a charm the young artist had never seen in any other woman.

"If I did not feel it to be the way, I could not do it. All that I am, and hope to be, I owe to you, my more than sister. Had you but checked the beautiful visions of my brain, my dream of artist-life would have vanished as snow on water."

"The artist's work is a noble one. Through the gate Beautiful he is to lead others up, interpreting by patient, plodding toil the vision he beholds."

"All artists in a different way. Philip with words winning the affection of his hearers, and persuading them to see the beauty of a better way. You with pen-pictures reaching still farther, and helping on to good. Ethel as a ray of light in that dark land —"

"Give me a place," said Felix, playfully.

"I have dared to hope when listening to you on declamation days, that you would follow in Philip's footsteps," answered May, in gentle tones. "To see you good, noble men is all that I have desired. The path I leave to Him, whether a broad river, with silver oars and purple spreading sail, or a tiny rill, gurgling along, with none but God and humble folk to hear its song."

"You remember what father used to say about doing our work faithfully?" said Felix.

"This is the test: faithfully to do His will, asking no questions."

Thus the talk went round, the influences of the hour in harmony with the spirit of their hearts, and rendering it easier to say good-by. To those that recognize His love, distance is nothing: the far-off islands of the sea are His, the golden chain of love still binding them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LEAVE-TAKING.

ALL day Robert had been in the garden: the fence was weak, and in many places a board had sprung, calling for extra nails and a stronger post. Then the grape-vines had to be propped, and the leaves plucked off, in order that the rich clusters might sweeten in the sunshine. Felix was in the strawberry bed, enlarging and resetting, turning in the tendrils and covering with mould, preparing for another year, and another crop; too far from Robert for many words; while the swift blows of his hammer were distinctly heard, with a mellow whistle caught in the flower-cups, and echoed by the birds. It was pleasant to see him there: his hands skilled in setting posts, driving nails; and when this was done, could take the chisel, and chipping at the marble, bring to light the angel buried there.

Through the rift of leaves, Felix caught sight of a white dress fluttering in and out of the door, with snatches of songs, and the silvery sound of a woman's voice.

Being the youngest, Felix had not thought so much of the future, looking to Robert as far superior to himself in knowledge, leaning upon him for advice in work and study. "This is about the last work," Felix whispered to himself; "and he 's just as much interested as though he never thought of doing anything else;" and he straightened himself and carried his basket of strawberry-plants to the other side of the garden: "it will be lonely

enough without him!" and Felix worked and thought. It was a new thing for him to question. His father's death was his first grief, and now there was a snapping of home-chords, and, in his boyish weakness, he put up his hand to brush away the tears.

The last nail was struck; the purple clusters had a firm support. Robert swung his coat over his arm, and, with his garden tools, went to the house. Presently he emerged fresh and buoyant, as if work was unknown to him; his hands full of letters, going to the post-office.

Felix's work was done, the cows brought home and milked; and by that time Robert came, with reading-matter sufficient to turn the rills of thought into deeper channels. Philip had written largely of his English home, giving minute descriptions of the life he led, the books he studied. Now he was coming home — would be with them by such a day. The glow on May's face deepened, while waves of color came and went on Ethel's cheek. Mr. Meade must see his pupils before they left, and Mr. Hosford could not come — his wife was ill.

At the tea-table, Dr. and Mrs. Prime joined them; and the talk enlarged: speaking of the times, the wants and needs of distant fields, and avenues open for the Light to enter. Then came Alfred Brown and the "little mother," and for a time, music was the theme.

"If I cannot talk with them at once, I can sing," Ethel said to Dr. Prime.

"The mystery of music none can fathom; we can note its effect: there is no heart but is touched by it in a greater or less degree," returned Dr. Prime.

"It is one of the mistakes of the Christian world not to think sufficiently of music. It is quite as much a command to praise as it is to pray. 'Let all the people praise him," said Alfred Brown.

"It will be a happy day when this can be effected: there are too many silent voices in our churches," responded Dr. Prime.

"Custom has had to do with this; choir-singing taking the place of the grand upheaving song of the congregation."

"Choir singing, I do not object to, as leading the people; but I would have all sing in church, or out of church. To revolutionize thoroughly, we must sing more in our families. Music must be introduced into our primary schools, our seminaries and colleges of learning; making it incumbent upon every one who aims at culture, to know how to sing."

"'He can't even sing' being a reproach; as 'He can't even swim,' among the Spartans," said Robert, gayly.

Another song, and the company disbanded; the Doctor saying, as he went out:

"Philip will be here to-morrow?"

"We expect him."

"And Adam?"

"The day after, with Mr. Meade."

It was a new thing to sit and talk with Philip of his new life. Two years of study and travel had done much for him: the lithe figure had grown firm; his face wore a look of manhood — stronger, more elevated. A new thing to go to church and find him sitting on the sofa with Dr. Prime. Stranger still to listen to Adam True, as he opened the morning service, reading a portion of Scripture, and then offering a prayer: the sweet, touching confidence, the blended love and trust; with no studied effort, no oratorical display—like a child in the presence of a father, with no fears, no concealments.

At night the entire service was his. It was the first time they had heard him since his ordination. With a more

attractive person than usually falls to one, his mental gifts were in keeping. With a strangely musical voice he united a loving tenderness, drawing the audience to him with a certain truthfulness of manner; unfolding the Scriptures in such a way that they were won irresistibly to look, the tears running down their faces as he depicted the love of God in sending His only Son to die for sinners.

Loving words and gentle hand-clasps met him as he came down from the pulpit. Most of them had known him in his boyhood—some of them had loved him, and now they felt proud of him. Deacon Stiles, with his wife, and Miss Hazard, were among his warmest friends.

"I can never do too much for you," said the deacon, the tears running down his cheeks; "there was a time when I wronged you—I did not mean it, though."

"Say no more of that. Had your course been different when I was a child, it is very possible my life would not have run in this channel," returned Adam.

The ship was in the harbor: there could be no more delay. There was a sad leave-taking in the gabled house: the breaking up of old ties, the willing responses to the new; and they started for Boston. May and Philip accompanied them. With new scenes, new acquaintance, and a succession of meetings, May had no time for gloom; and only when she found herself standing on the wharf, the ship slowly receding from her sight, did she begin to feel her loneliness.

"He will provide for them and for us," whispered Philip.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DESERTED HOME.

"I FELT sure you would come to-night," said Katy; "there has been so many to the house to-day. You are tired, and half sick; depend upon it, they shall not have a look for a day or two;" and she drew May along the hall, and up the stairs.

"I kindled a fire—it takes off the chill, and makes the room more cheerful. Here is your dressing-gown and slippers; just let me have your wraps;" and Katy kept up a stream of kindly words, her hands busy as her tongue, and not dreaming to stop till she saw May quietly resting on the lounge.

"Now I will look after Philip, and Felix," as she crossed the room, unlooped the curtain, and turned to see what more was needed.

"A cup of tea, and some of my nice rolls, and you will sleep, and wake as good as new."

Activity is a great aid to self-control. Under cover of something to do, Katy kept the tears from running over, kept her brain bright and cheerful. She knew how lonely it must be to May: she knew how lonely it had been to herself.

To May it was needful rest after the excitement of the last two weeks; shutting her eyes as she lies there, a shade paler, perhaps, and thinking it all over. Days passed; a slow fever kept her in bed: Dr. Wiseman's visits were again needful. "Nature will not be forced: there is a

limit—beyond that, and she will be sure to avenge herself. You have been trying to do too much."

"Only tired a little," answered May.

"That 's enough!" and the Doctor's voice had a touch of tenderness, in spite of his words.

"Visitors must be turned over to Philip; and tell him he must not mind taking tea by himself—at least, for a week," to Katy, as she went out.

Philip found his time consumed in answering calls. A new sympathy was awakened for this part of woman's work. "I wonder if it 's always so! And how does she manage to do as much?" he exclaimed, as he bowed out his last visitor and once more turned to his review. Autumn had wellnigh gone when May took her place at the tea-table: a chill was in the air when the sun went down, and the stars sparkled with added brilliancy.

"We are glad to see you," said Philip, with a touch of his old manner; "but, with your leave, I will preside;" motioning Katy to place the tea-urn before his plate.

"A little like old times, is n't it?" as Felix passed Katy's crisp cakes; "there 's just two people I never can do without."

"An unmistakable compliment," said Philip, with a laugh; "it is easy to see who these favored ones may be. Pray, was I so long away that you learned to do without me?"

"With you, I knew it would be a necessity; but these two will fall to me by right."

"Do you favor this compact, Katy?" and Philip succeeded in making May laugh, as he rehearsed the nameless acts showing Katy's preference for Felix, to the injury of himself.

"You were always a tease, and I 'm thinking your scholarship has not taken it entirely away. You forget Felix was

but a little baby when Katy had to do with him; and indeed, it 's almost as much she thinks of him, as of Alfred;" and Katy's face grew earnest.

"I know this, Katy; and I think, as Felix says, there are two persons whom it is his right to love above all others."

As the days wore on, Philip was more from home; several calls had been extended to him, and invitations to fill pulpits for a day. May knew that this must be; and small as the circle, she saw that it must still be less.

During May's illness, Katy had taken pains to arrange the rooms in their usual order—a certain warmth and beauty that arises from the presence of little things: there was nothing cold in the atmosphere: book-shelves were never allowed to stand trim and untouched—books were made to be read. Mrs. Shippen taught May, and May taught Katy. Papers were scattered on the tables; and if a chart lay on the carpet, and a magazine on the sofa, it never created disorder.

"Much time can be saved in this way; odd minutes when we are waiting, and not sufficiently long to allow us to unlock the book-case, or to draw a magazine from its place on the topmost shelf in the library," Mrs. Shippen had said.

In the parlor, May found a ribbon that Ethel had worn. Enough to spoil the day for certain housekeepers on Miss Hazard's plan, but causing a little, joyous cry to spring to May's lips: the room was not half as lonely.

As she grew stronger, May arranged her writing-table with a methodical use of time. There was nothing for loneliness, nothing for idle dreaming. If there were less to care for at home, there would be more time for others. It was settled—her work-day life begun.

"Sister, can you advise me in this?" and Philip came in, one evening, his hands full of letters.

"You know I have been hesitating between several places. Here is another—a large manufacturing town—church weak: a good place to build up."

"Do you feel that you can do more good here?" as the letter was laid before her.

"For the last week I have had but two places in view, feeling sure that I would decide upon one; but there was a quick, upspringing feeling, as I looked at this—a feeling that does not require time to decide. It looks to me as the more needy field—a field that demands deep, earnest work."

"In this case, it is the place. If the community is such as here described, there will be no lack of listeners."

"Much as I dislike to leave you, I am still anxious to be settled."

"We must not keep you—it is needful for workmen to be employed: some on the walls, and some in the valley; the trumpet must be blown, and the nail fastened in a sure place."

"And this factory-town looks to you like a ready field?"

"I should judge it to be a place where you could do good."

"The most good?"

"Do not depend upon your own judgment, Philip. In questions that perplex, we have only to ask."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE UNLOOKED-FOR GUEST.

THE glorious vision of autumnal days: the mellow splendor of a sunset tinging the hills with opal light, skirting the valleys, and fringing the trees with gold. May had been to call on Mrs. Belcher, talking of Hannah, and listening to Harvey's plans. "When Philip is settled," she whispered to herself, and there was a thought of what her manuscript would bring. She did not need it; and through the coming time, what pleasure writing for herself, and winning something for home and foreign work! Crossing the meadow she thought of it, and by the spring. It took away all sense of loneliness. Looking into the crystal cup, she no longer saw the Undine, neither the fairies at their dance; living in a world of her own, unwinding golden thread, and stringing it with pearls of truth. And pulling a leaf from the silvery mullein, she made a cup, just as she used to do. It was not so very long ago. Youth had slipped from her, leaving a maturer beauty, just as the opening bud is followed by the full-blown rose.

Slowly she walked: Philip met her.

"I am sent to hasten you a little," and he pointed to the veranda, with several visitors in waiting.

"It would seem that autumn keeps her treasures for this place—such tints of red and gold I find nowhere else," said Mrs. Prime.

"There is a mellow beauty on the hills that far exceeds what we have known before," returned May.

"How much of our happiness depends upon atmospheric influences, it is difficult to tell; such days seem to unfold a leaf in my own nature that is not to be read at any other time," said Dr. Prime.

"Has Philip told you that Hampton is favored with a president?" asked the Doctor, after a pause.

"He told me the chair was tendered one whom he knew in England."

"He has accepted."

"Philip will rejoice at this."

Tea was announced, and the honor of colleges and the dignity of presidents was for the time forgotten.

"I am glad that I deferred leaving for a week," said Philip, a few days after the above interview. "The steamer that came in last week brought my friend. Dr. Prime has invited him to spend a week in Wilton, and he expects him to-day. I would not wonder if the Doctor brings him up this evening."

May was at the table, writing, the least wave of impatience tinging her check. She trusted to finish the chapter on which she was engaged. She felt like it; but Philip's friend must be welcomed by Philip's sister. Pen and ink were put aside, the unconscious paper swept into the drawer. Gliding up the staircase, she soon appeared, fresh and rosy, her plain dress scrupulously neat, the tiny white ruffles glistening. With a smile, Philip's eyes followed her as she made a few changes in the room, cutting fresh flowers and adjusting vases. There was evident improvement; the perfume of the roses grew deeper.

A step was on the pavement—a firm, manly tread; the gate swung to with a click: a wave of color mounted to

May's cheek, and her work slipped from her fingers. Philip answered the bell. The hall-lamp was lit, and the door was ajar. A moment—it seemed to May an age: the door swung open—Philip entered with his guest. May stood up. Rufus Holt was before her.

Autumn was more golden, the days girdled with beauty. A rare reunion in the gabled house. Years were as though they had not been. With Rufus and Philip, May wandered over the hills, visiting the spring, and the old home; renewing acquaintance, and making new ones, and at night listening to the voice richer, more musical, by reason of added culture.

Rufus Holt had much to say of the way and manner by which he had been led; the sorrow through which he passed before he saw the necessity of being at peace with God, looking to Jesus as the One of all others to love. A precious reunion, with questions innumerable; and this was the last evening of his stay.

The shadows deepened, and the air was balm. Against the blue fretwork of the sky one star appeared—another, and still another, flashing like diamonds.

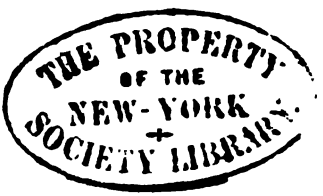
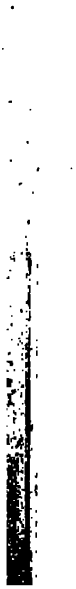
Back through the years Rufus Holt went: the mother's dying charge; then of his plans and hopes; the fading away of the bright dream, and the lesson learned of love to Him. Did she remember these days? weaving their memory with the present, and closer, more firmly bound by sorrow each had known?

There was a whispering sound among the trees, and Rufus Holt knew that hereafter his work would be shared with one familiar with the task.

"Felix can study with me," said Rufus Holt.

Years have passed. Hampton College has been a power

in the land, its noble president loved and honored. At the close of a late speech, he said:

"If I have made a little reputation, achieved a little success, I owe it more to my wife than to any other human being."

THE END.